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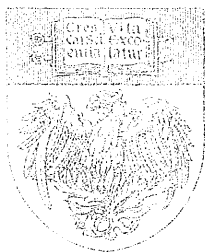
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# THE NG COMMUNITY

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## THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

*First published, January, 1938*

# THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

BY

H. C. L. HEYWOOD, M.A.

*Fellow and Dean of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge*

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THE six lectures here printed were delivered in Cambridge in the Michaelmas term, 1936, at the invitation of the University Church of England Council; and afterwards I was asked to publish them. I have made no attempt to alter their original spoken form. The lectures were prepared with no expectation that they would be printed, and I think I have sometimes failed to make proper acknowledgment of my debt to others. I know that in a few places I have been unable to trace the source of some sentences I have borrowed.

I found the task entrusted to me difficult. The course was intended primarily for those not studying theology, and I was asked to combine instruction with an attempt to foster the devotional life. This must be my excuse for the method adopted. I am alive to the fact that it is open to criticism, and acutely conscious of the inadequacies of the result.

H.C.L.H.

Cambridge,

*December, 1937.*



## I. THE COMMUNITY AS THE ACT OF GOD

IN choosing the title of "The Worshipping Community" for these lectures my purpose has been to direct attention to the need among Christians for a greater emphasis upon their membership of a society whose primary duty and privilege it is to worship; and to show that for the Christian there is no place for isolation or solitariness; that the sole direction of the Community's activity is towards God; and that God is the ground and continual stay of the Community's existence.

The state of the world to-day shows two pressing dangers—dangers which can broadly be described as those of individualism and humanism; and it is in a general relation to those two dangers that I propose to develop my subject. It may seem strange in these days of the totalitarian state to assert that individualism is one of the world's dangers, but a little reflection will surely show that Fascism, National Socialism and Communism (at any rate of the kind now being developed by Stalin<sup>1</sup>) are, if not individualistic in terms of persons, certainly individualistic in terms of nations. In other words, whether in the individual or in the nation, the legacy of the last 400 years is still with us, a legacy deriving much of its force from Descartes, who deepened that stream of individualism which is daily assuming more menacing proportions. That there must be individualism is undoubtedly true—"What shall a man give in exchange for his own

soul?"—and always there will remain that inner citadel, "It is mine and no one else's." But the distortion of this inevitable individualism occurs when we find ourselves saying of any matter, "This is only my concern"; because we know individuals only in and through a Community, and we shall get to a truer conception of the individual only by seeing him in his setting of a Community, where there is continuity through change and to which the ideas of membership, fellowship and body can apply.

The other of the two dangers to which I referred just now is that of humanism. There is little need for further illustration of that. It is contained in every instance of that marked tendency towards self-sufficiency which confronts us in every sphere of life. We see it in economic and political affairs, in close relation to nationalism, which, as I have just argued, is individualism of another order. "Everywhere a close parallel can be traced between the rise of political nationalism and the adoption of economic self-sufficiency."<sup>2</sup>

We see it in the realm of recent ethics, with its frequent assertion of ethical relativity, leading to the contention that there can be no absolute standard. We see it in ecclesiastical affairs, where stunts and trombones and solos are the refuge of distracted priests to drag people into their churches. We see it in the domain of philosophy, where the emergent God is but a polite veiling of the contention that there is no help outside ourselves. And the proof of the fallacy of all these is around us in the world's chaos of to-day. In opposition to all this self-sufficiency is the clear cut assertion of scripture: "Our sufficiency is of God." That is the claim the Community must make and that is the claim that the Community must justify. There is indeed room for the supposition that

we are wrong in making that claim, but if we are wrong there is no room for the Christian Church.

\* \* \* \*

It is a far cry from the distracted present to that day some 4,000 years ago when Abraham went wandering at the bidding of some mysterious call, but there is no beginning possible for us later than that. It is in terms of sojourning, in terms of that whole set of ideas suggested by the phrase "camels and tents," that we are to think of the Community to which we belong. " 'We are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were,' says David in Chronicles, and the Psalmist when he muses on the mystery of life and death. Others may be glad when corn and wine and oil increase but the people of God use another measure for their happiness. . . [They] move onwards from camp to camp, 'mansion' to mansion in the Father's house of life eternal, laying up a treasure in the secret home, sojourners, nomads, not citizens of stable civilizations, for ever 'seeking a country.' " <sup>3</sup> And why? Why is there this primary and continuing characteristic of the people of God? It is because God has spoken, acted, intervened, taken sides; and henceforth those who heard and answered were no longer what they had been, but had become a colony of heaven, and that the worshipping Community is still. It is called, chosen and foreordained; it is in the world, but not of the world; its citizenship is in heaven. It is a people of God, and that people through its long existence has shown two main characteristics: (i) a continued sense of the ever-present action of God; (ii) a recognition of themselves as being a Community chosen, guided, adoring, backsliding, but penitent and then restored; and the pattern of the Old Testament exhibits the growth of this Community by selection and contrac-



tion. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and many unknown as well, all in their different ways contributed to the development of the remnant which was "saved" to become itself a saving agent.

It is easy to make the Old Testament nothing more than a subject for examination, and to discover in it plenty of material for comment and explanation, but that is not our purpose now. Our concern is to see its authority by seeing its portrayal of the action of God—an action of guidance, of testing and of purification, so that "only a remnant" was left as fewer and fewer answered the call and fewer and fewer were obedient to the command; till in the end that answering and that obedience narrowed down to one single Person, and remnant, obedience and sonship were focussed in a criminal dying on a Cross. That was the end, but that was the beginning, for it is no mere verbal metaphor that describes Jesus of Nazareth as the second Adam.

History converges to that dark moment, but from Him diverges again, for in Him is the seed of the future Community, and here in His death and resurrection is the one completely adequate category for interpreting the course of history. Once again, that was the act of God, and springing from that act, but through Him, and only through Him, rooted in the past, there is the Israel of God who owe their existence to their relationship to Him; a relationship which Paul could describe only in the words "in Christ."

Of some such sort is the pattern in Scripture of the nature of the Christian Community, and that is why I begin these lectures with an examination of the truth and authority of the Bible.

\* \* \* \*

The Lambeth Conference of 1930, in its third

resolution, affirmed "the supreme and unshaken authority of the Holy Scriptures as presenting the truth concerning God and the spiritual life in its historical setting, and in its progressive revelation, both throughout the Old Testament and the New." <sup>4</sup> And the whole note of the Encyclical Letter prefaced to the resolutions was that of witness. "The Church is called to bear witness to the supreme revelation of God," the Bishops wrote; and again, "The Church of Christ is a fellowship of witness," which it cannot be unless we are ready "to read and ponder afresh . . . the Bible, and in particular the New Testament," and to insist "upon the duty of thinking and learning as essential elements in the Christian life." <sup>5</sup>

What then is the authority of Scripture?; what is its truth? and how are we to witness to it? It will clear the ground if first we dismiss from our minds certain false ideas.

(1) Belief in the authority and the truth of Scripture does not involve the belief that it contains no mistakes. This old battlefield is now of little more than historical interest. Here and there in odd corners we find queer folk, the uninstructed scribes, who expend their ingenuity and waste their devotion in the vain attempt to harmonize contradictions, and to explain away what they conceive to be difficulties. But, for most of us now, the value of Scripture would be far less if it did not contain the difficulties they hope to remove.

(2) Yet, while we are ready to admit error and contradiction, we still as a Church seem to cherish the belief that truths about God can be proved from written words. The sixth article recites that no man is to be required to believe anything that may not be proved by Holy Scripture; and even the proposed Prayer Book of 1928 would require a priest on his

ordination to declare that he will teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture.

In my judgment it is impossible to give a reasonable meaning to the word "prove" if taken in its ordinary English sense. If we are to be assured of the truth of what we seek to prove, we must know the truth of what we start with in order to prove it: and the words of Scripture can never prove their own truth. No searching of the Scriptures can take the place of a personal coming. Moreover, if God be living and active in His world, written words can no more tell us finally about Him, than can a biography written ten years ago tell us what a man is like and what he is doing to-day.

But, if we turn to the Latin of Article VI, we find that the word translated "proved" can also be translated "tested" or "recommended." And, if we are justified in this alteration, Scripture can be regarded not as a mine of miraculous proof texts for static belief, but as a storehouse of golden recommendations for the high art of living.

(3) A third false idea concerns our witness to Scripture rather than its authority and truth. With the denial of the possibility of proof from scripture must go the practice of coaxing from the text things it does not contain at all. We all have heard of instances of this—such as that Job predicted poison gas, and someone else condemned motor bicycles, or a particular style in which women used to wear their hair. But even when we are ready to admit the futility of searching the Scriptures for what they do not contain, we sometimes find it hard to carry our reasoning to its conclusion. What I mean is this—when we treat Scripture in a way in which we would

treat no other book, by using it as a source of all kinds of relevant and irrelevant information, we isolate it in lonely grandeur. And even when we no longer try to extract the impossible from it, we are still prone to encourage this isolation. "Hands off the Bible" is no way to witness to the Book. If it cannot stand and shine on its own merits it does not deserve to be called the Word of God; and rather than maintain its dignity by demanding that it shall be treated differently from other books, we should welcome every opportunity of bringing it into the thick of life, and face to face with the sternest and most gruelling criticism, knowing full well that what is of God need neither fear the searching light of truth nor seek safety by withdrawing itself from the world.

So far we have been clearing the ground: we have not yet discovered in what sense the Bible is "true," or wherein lies its "supreme and unshaken authority." We can at once dismiss from our mind the idea of truth as atomic point to point linear correspondence of two series—there can be no life in a mere succession of independent moments: and, however we may express it, the truth of Scripture must be intimately related to life—both the life of an individual and the life of the whole. And again, it is of no purpose to say that the Scriptures are true in the sense of their being the record of what men thought. The record of the remarks of a lunatic who thought he was a poached egg would in this sense be just as true and just as useless. But taking a hint from another meaning of the Greek word which is usually translated "true" let us think of the Scriptures as true in the sense of being *real*—real, that is to say, in that the ideas and their relations which are contained in Scripture are the universal ideas timelessly involved in

the continual coming together of man and God.

All life is a rhythm of tension and its resolution, of need satisfied by experiment : and this is true of the mind in its more specialized activity which manifests itself as religion. And the sequence of tension and its resolution, of need and experiment, in each one of us in our religious life, while unique and peculiar in that it is *ours*, is yet no new thing. The advance through error, first unknown, then discovered and overcome, to something believed to be higher and known to be more adequate to satisfy the self's needs, is an advance which is common to us all in that sooner or later we must all pass the same landmarks, yet which is peculiar for each one of us in that between those turning points we are free to go where we will. And this journey is not one upon which we can enter or not as we please. Whether we like it or not, we start to travel when we start to be—indeed the truth of being itself may lie in the ascent and the conflict, in tension and its resolution. Nor is there any withdrawal from this journey. We may go slowly, we may sit by the wayside, and we may even face the oncoming host and move for a while down the hill. But not for long. For whether we have stopped because we are weary, or only because we have little use for the journey, sooner or later something will make us go on. Our laziness will shame us ; or the view ahead will glow with a new attraction ; or one will pass us as we rest, and beckon us to make our way with him, or will offer us a copy of something which, he says, has guided many who have travelled that way before.

In these last words you will have seen the figure under which I suggest we should think of the authority and the truth of Scripture. We are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were, and

what we take for our journey is not a universal encyclopædia, even if it be a pocket edition on India paper, but a map which embodies the discoveries through trial and error of those who explored the road we tread—a map whose worth lies in the fact that it embodies the old in the context of the new.

Now, most of us have used maps, and have recognized their authority and tested their truth. But though a map came to us with countless assertions of its accuracy printed in the margin, that would not prove to us its truth. We can only discover *that* when we observe that journeying by it gets us nearer to our destination, that if we take the paths it recommends (you will remember how we substituted this word for “proves” just now) we actually find ourselves on the right road. And a map would be neither true nor useful if it failed to show the wrong roads and where they lead to, and so to tell us what to avoid. But even so, what sets us travelling is not the map: that is no more than an aid—though one we should find it hard to do without. The moving force is something other—most often a person whom we love and whom we need to see. And so it is with the life of the spirit. If there be any truth in the belief that all things have their origin in God, then in everything around us we make touch with His mind, and through that fragmentary touch are constrained to know Him more, and so set out. And for our journey we may take, if we will, a map handed back to us by the travellers of the past. We too must pass the same points: and the map they give us is not a panorama of all that we shall meet on the way, or of what awaits us at our journey’s end; but it tells us of their mistakes, of the short cuts *we* may take, but which *they* discovered only after long delay, of the strange cruel places they lodged in when they took the wrong turn-

ing, and of the joy they found along the road. And in telling us of the old—of what *they* did and found—it points us to the new, to what *we* may do and see.

This then is the authority and truth of Scripture. How are we to witness to it? One requirement is that we should try to understand the map better—or to speak plainly, that we should think hard and read hard about and around the Bible. If we want to understand a play of Shakespeare we enter into its historical setting, and we read it as one whole, perhaps with introduction, glossary and notes. Yet we expect the Bible to be intelligible, read in little bits and with practically no background and explanation. The sooner we are prepared to give as much serious work to understanding the Bible as a whole as we give to understanding any other technical and highly specialized book we may have to read, the sooner will we be able to use it as it can be used, and to show others the worth of what lies ready at their hand.

And the other requirement for our witness is that having learnt or, rather, while we learn to understand our map, we should journey by it. A minute searching of the Scriptures is without purpose unless it go hand in hand with something else. To think that in the Scriptures we have eternal life is like thinking that in a map we have not only a picture, but also all the joys of the journey itself and of our destination—the smell of the wild strawberries in the hedge, or the crackle of the fire in the hearth of the inn on a frosty evening. A map is worthless until it is used, but when it is used it points the way: so, too, the Scriptures. They do, in fact, bear witness to the Lord; but that witness is only effective, just as a map is only effective, when we determine to come to Him. “Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life” Jesus is reported to have said when He was con-

trasting "the intense misplaced diligence of search . . . with the futile result,"<sup>6</sup> and none of the modern equivalents of searching the Scriptures can ever take the place of that coming to Him, which is both the beginning and the end of our journey.

Without such a coming, Scripture is for us untrue and without authority; but as soon as we turn to Him and take the first steps on the way, we need no one to assure us of the authority and the truth of that which we have taken for our guide. And when we find our mistakes and our failures, our surprises and our perplexities, the whispers of our sadness and the songs of our march all gathered together in this companion of our journey, then we know beyond all gain-saying that it is true, utterly and compellingly true: for the pilgrim's progress, as well as his heart's desire, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It is with some conception of the truth and authority of the Bible of the kind I have just now sketched that we can go on to consider the place of criticism, and of our understanding of that truth and that authority. There are often those who in their eagerness to uphold the authority of Scripture would argue hotly against any criticism of it. Common ways of expressing that antagonism are either that of arguing from the sentence, "All Scripture (is) given by inspiration of God," or that of urging that because Jesus used Scripture, Scripture itself must be impregnable; and those who thus argue seem unable to understand that both in the end rest upon a fallacious type of reasoning—that kind of reasoning which would seek to prove the truth of something from itself. If I want to know how tall John is and someone tells me John is as tall as John, that may be true but it is very useless. And even if I have a map with a certificate printed in the margin testifying to its



accuracy, that certificate itself is, as I have said, of no avail whatever unless I either know the ground the map represents, or know the person who signed the certificate. So I shall spend no more time meeting those who say there should be no criticism of this authoritative word of God, and pass on to consider why there is need for criticism, and how criticism can illuminate the essential character of the Community whose book the Bible is.

I suggest you should think of the Bible in terms of a big well-thumbed commonplace book of family history and stories; think of it as a book in manuscript with many blank pages and wide margins; think of it as a book often read, discussed and annotated as the family repeatedly discovered the application to its present affairs of what their ancestors in the long past had lived through and learnt to be important; think of the book as subject to hard wear because it was much loved, as getting torn and as having its pages sometimes not quite accurately replaced; think of it above all as a living growing thing, as no dry static repository of merely past law, but as a dynamic growth, active in every detail of the Community's present, because they saw how the past was continually teaching them how to live.

If that be not too fanciful a picture of Scripture, consider the purpose of criticism as that of reconstructing from the book, which has grown, in some such way, the history of the family whose growth it enshrines. The need will be to discover the phases of that growth, to detect dislocations of the pages, to observe where comments and notes in the margin crept into the body of the text, as the present learnt from the past, and to explain topical references—clear to those who made them, because they were living in the middle of what they were thinking about,

but obscure to us now, who must struggle painfully to discover the subtlety of the family joke. And how will you do this? You will read it and go on reading it, and gradually you will observe (more quickly if you read it in the Hebrew) changes in style, changes in expression, bits that have been inserted, bits that have got out of place, bits where there has been some kind of harmonizing process at work. And not only will you read the book itself, but you will read local contemporary history, because only so will you understand the meanings of the words, the background to the ideas, and the full context of the allusions that they put into their evergrowing book. The result of such a study will be not to destroy all the family's present traditions, but to bring out its continuity, its spirit, and the love of its members one for another and for their family's past. And you will come to know the family as a living organism, because you have seen it alive through the growing book which was the product of its life.

Once again, it is easy to formalize all this, but it is a danger to be avoided. We can distinguish three stages in this process of criticism. There is first the stage which primarily concerns the text, when we seek to find either unintentional mistakes in those who copied the family's books, or variations (perhaps too strongly called intentional mistakes), intended either to simplify what the writer found obscure, or to harmonize a passage he was writing with one very like it which he knew better, or even to change what he thought could not have been meant by those he was copying.

And then, when the text has been fixed as near as may be, the next stage is that of discovering strata within the various books. A book like that of Isaiah comes to us as a whole, and we look at it to find

layers; and the discovery of these layers is suggested to us either by discontinuity of narrative or of ideas, or by change of style and vocabulary, or by a variation in the historical background presupposed by what is being written. And in the end instead of one book all of one date, and largely unintelligible on that account, we find a growing, living thing, exhibiting the hopes and fears of possibly 600 years.

And then the third stage is that of interpretation. When we have got an approximation to the true text, and when we have got that text approximately dated, there still remains the all important question of what it meant for the writer and for his contemporaries. And only when we have tackled this have we any right to talk about its meaning for us. The result of criticism in these three stages is to see the book no longer as a volume of detached oracular pronouncements, but as a history of men's growth in apprehension of God. It is seen to be personal in a way which no utterances can be which are divorced from human need and an historic setting.

\* \* \* \*

Having criticized, what do we discover, especially about Jesus? We discover Him as a Jew, born into a Community united by their attitude towards their book. And if we are to understand what the book tells us about Jesus (and that is our primary present concern) we shall have to try to understand where He is to be seen in relation to the religious history of His people. Here is the supreme example of the worth of criticism. For if we read the Old Testament in its present form it often seems an incongruous mixture, but when the family history is sorted out from the family book there is seen to be a fairly steady growth. It is the history of a pre-eminently religious nation,

and a record of a people's belief about their growing and living experience of God, and of what they held to be His dealings with the world. Very briefly, what is it that we find? <sup>7</sup>

The beginning, as I have already hinted, is that of a call to be strangers and pilgrims. There is unrest and wandering, and the God of the tribe got attached to wells and rocks, to trees and springs. There was undoubtedly recognition of "otherness" of a kind, but the "otherness" had not got much ethical content, and the function of the deity, who was localized though invisible, was concerned mainly with material prosperity; and communion with Him was through sacrifice, through blood poured out and meat eaten.

Moses stands out and marks a division in the growth of this Community's ideas. What they learnt from him seems roughly to have been threefold: (i) that though there might be many Gods, yet for Israel there could be but one; (ii) with the earliest notions of individuality the idea of God was fashioned in terms of what men knew themselves to be; (iii) with this new awareness of individuality the earliest ethical notions came in. The covenant was a bargain, "God has delivered us, we must do his will."

And eventually the people settled in the Land; Monarchy increased the growing national consciousness, and Prophecy added to the development by seeing events in history as having primarily a religious significance, and therefore as being divinely enjoined in this way. The prophetic philosophy of history issued in the development of the ethical conception of God, and justice and love, holiness and suffering were seen more and more to be part of His being.

The shock of the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile moved men's minds in two directions. Because God was no longer worshipped in Jerusalem, but could be

adored by the waters of Babylon, the idea of His transcendence grew; and because the past was golden there was the tendency to codify what they had then done in the hope that they would be able to do it again; and with codification there came legalism. And there were several parallel growths at this time arising variously out of these two main movements. Angels are sometimes introduced as mediators to bridge the gap between the people and a distant God who has withdrawn Himself; pessimism sometimes finds expression as men think of the chaotic vanity of life; suffering becomes more of a mystery as a just man turns inward upon himself; and all the time, in a diversity of ways, there is the growth of the idea of a future personal triumphant invasion of an Anointed of God who would bring about a reign of victory and holiness. The dominant expectation was that God would act in holy love. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth." "But now [God] hath prepared for them a city," and "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his Name."

It is against a background of some such kind as this that we must try to answer the question, "Where does Jesus stand in the religious history of His people?" If we were strictly chronological, the next question would now be "What did Jesus Himself think about God?"; but most of those who attempt this question find that it has to wait to be answered until another has been faced.

Just now I spoke of men's expectation of God's action in holy love, and because men found this expectation somehow being fulfilled in Jesus, the

pressing question is not, "What did Jesus think of God?" but the intensely personal one, "What do I think of Jesus?"; and the focus shifts to a human figure when men find that in their greater understanding of Him there comes new knowledge of God.

That is the burden of the New Testament; that is the clue to its understanding. For it is not to be thought of as photography, but as an interpretation of an experience, first inward and personal and then outward and corporate. The experience at its simplest was that Jesus lives; that through Him there is new access to God; that from Him comes new life, courage, joy and peace; and that this new life links all who share it. Something like that was the original, and the interpreters tried to relate it to an existing set of ideas. That is why we need to try to understand Paul and the others before we read the Gospels. They are making attempts to interpret what we are there going to read about in narrative form (although that narrative is itself interpretation); and, if the Christian claim is true, can you wonder that men wrestled with words that they found utterly inadequate to give it its full expression? And we, too, rationalize it and set limits to its living totality. We speak of *Christology* when we try to answer the question "Who is this?" We speak of *Atonement* when we try to reduce to cold concepts the victory of new life and our release from sin. We speak of a *Doctrine of the Church* when what we know is a Community of persons bound together by something far more than words can express.

It was upon this kind of interpretation that Paul and Peter and John and the writer to the Hebrews were engaged. It was this kind of awareness that the society was living through, and while it was doing this the Gospels emerged. And so side by side were the

ideas expressed in the two sentences: "He is before all things, and in him all things consist," and "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Both these were current coin to those who heard, or wrote, or read, and the interpretation of that paradox sets the problem for the ages; for, as I have said, the Gospels themselves are interpretations. They are Church books to be understood in terms of a society seeking to understand—in terms of a society or a Community of local societies with different needs, problems, perplexities.<sup>8</sup> And this being so, divergencies are very far from being the serious and fundamental things they are sometimes made out to be. But this being so, individual words and phrases can seldom be pressed as having in themselves final authority; rather is it the total impression that counts. Yet as we look at these earliest interpretations we may be sure of one thing—that we may never measure by our standards of what is possible and probable, and "what is unscientific is to begin by discarding."<sup>9</sup>

And as we look, what do we find? We find a sense of urgency, and of discontinuity expressed in a variety of ways. "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." "Ye must be born again." "Except ye turn, and become as little children." We find continually the pattern of personal discipleship in the claim and the challenge of the words "follow me!" We find, above all in the supreme figure, but clear also in those who follow Him, a selflessness which is the pattern of the Cross. And we find the eager expectancy of the multitudes who would see Jesus ("As many as touched him were made whole"), and who *were* made whole, so these interpreters infer, by the act of God in Christ establishing in the present the Community of the redeemed people of God.

Let me sum up so far. We have inquired how the

act of God constituting a worshipping Community is to be known. One way is by seeking knowledge of Jesus from the Bible. That led us to consider its truth and its authority, and that again led us to consider the place of criticism and how criticism showed the book to be a living, growing thing, always related to the people of God. We saw this people's expectancy of God's redemptive action, and we have seen how the interpreters of the New Testament, whether in Epistle or Gospel, regarded Jesus as actualizing this expectancy. One thing remains—to consider the place of this book in the daily lives of the worshipping Community. Is it practical? Does it get purchase on our lives as the word of God? Others, our ancestors, His people, had seen depression and failure, miracle and victory before, and had expressed themselves in ways which received the Community's approval—ways which sometimes seem negative or cruel, but ways all based on the dominant conviction, rooted in experience, that only in terms of obedience to the will of God does life make sense.

In this way then the present Community must approach the reading of its book; not as a daily task of magical but unknown significance, but because in its timeless ideas and the haunting music of its language not only do we see more clearly what we ought to do, but also—and here is the mystery of inspiration—we receive “grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.”

Look at this in the Old Testament. What do we find when we try to look at it as a whole? We see sin, and the defeat of sin. “The cords of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.” “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.” “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” We see the defeat of sin, by means of present



access to God in deliverance. "I sought the Lord, and he answered me." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit . . . and he hath put a new song in my mouth." And this deliverance, grounded in access, issues in understanding. "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God." And this is no transient deliverance. There is a steady quietness and confidence, both in the individual and in the world as ruled by God, because His strength is making a new world. "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses *Holy unto the Lord*"; "and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." The secret of this transformation in the individual, and of this newness in the world, is in the inner life, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," "and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." And man's main part is to recognize his littleness: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding." "Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained." And the reason for that is simply that "in the beginning God created the heaven and earth." "In the beginning God created"; and now God has created the worshipping Community. "And these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye may have life in his name." For the New Testament is one great song about what Easter represents: a many sided

re-interpretation of the theme, "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain"; and it is against that triumphant mystery that we must attempt a synoptic view of the whole of the New Testament. If we read it we shall understand other's experience of their discipleship, and we can learn from that. We shall understand more of the character of Jesus; and we shall learn more about the God whom Jesus called Father. If we think first of what others say about their discipleship, what do we find? "Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you"; and so they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name." In this Community there are "diversities of gifts but the same Spirit," and it possessed something which quite upset the standards of the world. "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Paul accounts for this by saying that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God"; and these are they who know that the Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation"—a power which is mediated and sustained by the intimate contact of the individual within the Community with their Lord and Master. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me"; and, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature"; or, yet again, in the Ephesian tradition, "I am the bread of life," and "I am the way, the truth and the life."

What did these disciples, who thought thus of themselves, treasure of the character of Him whose they were? Those whom He considered fortunate, worthy of congratulation, were the poor in spirit, were those

who knew their need and would crouch low in the presence of the holy. Those who mourned and were weak, those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake—these He congratulated. In other words, they completely reversed the accepted values of the Community in which they lived. And in His purpose, as His disciples knew, there was another as complete reversal; for He and they were "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" and He was "to give his life a ransom for many."

And the consequences of such a reversal were what might be supposed. "Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And for these stern consequences He showed endurance and courage which they treasured in their recollection of His steadfast setting of His face to go to Jerusalem. They treasured, too, His love in His prayer for the forgiveness of those who killed Him.

Yet, again, He spoke of His Father, and they treasured the recollection of what He thought and taught of God. I will just take three glimpses, from the many preserved in the growing Community's memory of the teaching of its Lord:

(1) The rule of God when it is actually experienced is worth all else. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." This rule of God, so supremely worth while, carries with it a sternness none can disregard. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

(2) Though it is a stern treasure, it is ever the rule

of the Father—a Father who is like one who would leave ninety-nine sheep to go and look for one which is lost, and whose love leaves no place for anxiety. “Be not anxious for your life . . . your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

(3) This loving care of the Father is summed up in the tale of the son who “gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country.” For when he arose and went to his Father, “while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and rān, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

\* \* \* \*

This parable of the Father’s love is a microcosm of the whole of Holy Scripture, which is a record of man’s experience of God’s dealing with sin through the Cross. A call, obedience, suffering, victory—that is the theme of the New Testament, indeed of the whole Bible; and it is found with many variations, but all having their common point in the sequence that victory only follows obedience and suffering. And the classic expression of this is in the words of the writer of Hebrews: “though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation.” “Unto all them that obey him”—that is the conclusion of the whole matter. All this remains unrelated and sterile till the power becomes personal and so fruitful. And a searching of the Scriptures, although they are that which bears witness to the act of God for man’s salvation, will not avail until we come ourselves that we may have life.

Too often we think that “this is a hard saying; who can hear it?” and so we walk “no more with him”; but there is an inevitability about the way

in which we are driven in the end to acknowledge with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And then it is a case of arising and going and making a new start; "forgetting the things which are behind" and pressing on to the prize. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." And in the power of that strength derision goes and pity vanishes: for hunger is satisfied only by the life given us in Him who is the head and ground of the Community and the object of its adoration and worship.

## II. SOME OF THE COMMUNITY'S INTERPRETATIONS. 1.

IN the first lecture I tried to show how in the Bible we can see the Church as the act of God. To see it thus is the first step both in knowing it as the worshipping Community and in seeing how far it is from being a voluntary association of people. And the importance of the Bible, therefore, lies not primarily in its ethics, but in its account of this act of God, and of the one continuing Community's increasing recognition of that act—an act concentrated in Calvary and the first Easter, and continued in the worshipping Community of the redeemed.

So rashly, perhaps, and certainly inadequately, I compressed into an hour some suggestions as to how we should think the truth of the Bible, and how we should criticize and try to understand it. Scripture contains that which transcends the tension of temporality, pointing outside the fickleness of time, and giving confirmation to the assurance that "our citizenship is in heaven." And it does this because He to whom it points as the head and the source, the root and the life of the Community, as well as the present object of that Community's worship, is Jesus, who "is before all things and in him all things consist." But ever against that transcendental claim is the question, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" There in two sentences is the paradox challenging our keenest interpretation; and my concern in this lecture and the next is to consider some of the earliest of the Community's attempts to understand and to interpret that paradox.

But if we are to consider the earliest of these attempts, we can do so with usefulness only in terms of the present; and there are therefore two preliminary considerations which need to be discussed before we can pass on to the history of interpretation. These two preliminary considerations can be stated thus:

(a) Why did Jesus attract men? and why does He now? In other words, what was it that led and leads to the necessity of interpretation? and

(b) How do we establish linkage from present to past? In other words, how do we satisfy ourselves that our consideration of the history of the earliest interpretation is of more than academic and historical interest?

Only when these two matters have been dealt with can we rightly pass to the earliest centuries.

## I

Why did Jesus attract men's loyalty and devotion? Put that way it may seem an absurd question to ask; but we must attempt to consider it.

What are the main notes of the earliest Christian Community? And as we try to answer that question we must remember what I suggested last time—that the Epistles are earlier than the Gospels, and that the Gospels themselves are products of a Community by which Jesus was regarded, not as a teacher, but as an object of religious devotion. Why then did He attract loyalty and devotion?

I think that we may answer this question by seeing four main notes within the New Testament. There is first the note of authority—authority expressed in a diversity of ways, but authority which in every way compelled the attraction of men. There was authority over men's bodies in the way He healed them; there

was authority over men's minds in the way He held them; there was authority in the claim He made for what He said and was, contained in the pregnant utterance, "Ye have heard that it was said. . . . 'but I say unto you.'" There was authority in that penetrating awareness whereby He got down to bedrock and "knew what was in man"; and there was authority in the simple command to follow, which led men to leave homes and occupations and go after Him.

It was because of all this authority, of these and other kinds, that the multitude "took him for a prophet" who had the word, and not as a scribe who was merely an interpreter of something that was already there. Here in Him something new was coming into the world, and into the hearts of men; and that was His authority.

The second of these notes is that of His example. This example attracted men in two ways. First, there was His example of unvarying purpose, shown in His inflexibility in proclaiming in season and out of season the good news of the reign of God, and all the implications that followed from the assertion of that good news. And the other kind of attracting example was His exhibiting in His own life the content of this good news. In Him men knew love—not the nebulous kind of love which is nothing more than emotion, but that kind of love which made men hear Him gladly, even when what He said hurt. That was the kind of love which made Him the "friend of publicans and sinners"; that was the kind of love whereby the blind received their sight. "I have given you an example," He said, and this example was beyond doubt one of the notes evoking men's loyalty and devotion.

The third note is closely linked with the two former. I will call it the note of conviction. It was the effect



upon men of this authority and this example, and it is symbolized in Peter's cry, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It was a conviction brought about by His penetrating insight which brought not peace but a sword; and which, in spite of that decisive, searching character, issued in the wondering assertion, "God hath visited his people," and ended in Peter's perplexed recognition, "Thou art the Christ." Out of this conviction, as the experience of the years was unfolded, there came the triumphant utterance, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

And the fourth of these notes evoking loyalty and devotion is that of transformation and responsibility. This is the main characteristic of the Epistles. In them we are always seeing that kind of triumphant transformation following upon touch with Him, which provokes the cry:

"Whoso hath felt the spirit of the highest  
Cannot confound, nor doubt him, nor deny."<sup>1</sup>

Such a transformation was beyond all doubt, but it was recognized in all humility, so that the Community could think of itself as "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," and as "no more strangers and sojourners," but as "fellow-citizens with the saints." And they thought of themselves as being that, not for anything they had done, but because through His death and resurrection they had been delivered; and those who were "in Him" were new creatures. The crucified Messiah was a stumbling-block to those who knew Him not, but to the Community the Cross was the sign of victory; because by it they had been transformed, and through it they had had responsibility laid upon them.

In some such way we can, I think, bring out the

main notes in the New Testament of the attraction exerted by Jesus upon men. And as we read it, we must be careful to distinguish present fact of experience from its interpretation and translation. Men had no doubt that something was happening to them, and that this had its ground in Jesus; and sure in those two things, they tried to fashion words to answer "why" and "how" to a certainty of triumphant knowledge which no argument could overthrow.

Of such a kind—exploring, diverse, yet always victorious—was the Community of those first days. But we may not remain in the past, and our questioning reaches into the present when we come to ask, "Why does Jesus attract men now?" Even if this is an even more ridiculous question than the first, we must attempt some kind of answer.

He attracts, first, as an historic figure. In that figure we see a character which evokes our almost unwilling loyalty, for in contemplating His determination we experience that rare quickening of our spirits when sternness attracts and we recognize the highest. Then again, there is attraction of a queer unpleasant sort in the relentless piercing of so many of His sayings. It has been described as comparable to a creeping barrage. We may say that "if this one doesn't get me the next one will"; and, as we read on, there is on the tip of our tongues the desire to say, "I pray Thee have me excused." But yet we go on, because in spite of the pain there is attraction. And further, in that historic figure there is attraction, not simply in the whole pattern of His character, or in the piercing of those sayings which we understand, but also in those darker sayings, with their unplumbed depths of meaning—sayings which take us where we have not been: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto

me." Sayings like that with their snatches of mysterious, compelling meaning, draw us or compel us, though we do not clearly understand.

But in the life of that historic figure, there is one historic event which stands out, and which is, I suppose, the dominant feature of the attraction He exercises upon the hearts of men. For His death, however we may think its implications, will always be a landmark in history, a power over men's lives. And whatever be our theories of Christology or Atonement, the saying "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw men unto me" is abundantly true; for a life given has been "a ransom for many," and that "vale of misery" has been a "well" of living water.

But that historic figure, and that unique event, are somehow present experience in some way quite other than the presentness of memory and reflection. No simply past event is adequate to explain what many claim to know.

Yet those of us who say we know that Jesus is present must be careful lest our assurance blind us to the problem our claims may present to others; and we need to be clear that we know what we mean when we talk of the presence of Jesus. Rashdall wrote, "A spirit is where it acts,"<sup>2</sup> and we, who are bound up with bodies, must not let that binding lead us to suppose that recognition of present personal existence is dependent on the present sensation of body. To restrict presence to mere physical presence were a narrow notion in these days of gramophones and wireless: better to begin with foot and finger prints, to go on to the presence no less mediated by style and handwriting and voice, and in the end to rest assured that "By their fruits ye shall know them" is as true now as it has ever been, and that now, as then, the verification of His presence is supremely to

be found in "Go . . . and tell John what things that ye have seen and heard." For beyond all doubt it is true that "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them."

Therein is that which at once constrains our loyalty and testifies to His presence, and this knowledge is mediated to us through others—and that at bottom is the meaning of the communion of saints. Through that great multitude we have known a call of God, first to relieve the suffering of the world, and then, because of our quick recognition of our utter insufficiency for that work, to be disciples and to learn to become usable.

At the start—and, indeed, I suppose always—there is the pain of knowing our poverty, "Nothing in my hand I bring": and always—yes, always—we are unprofitable servants. It hurts our pride: it is so satisfying to think there is something we can do. But one by one our cherished strongholds of self-sufficiency are broken down, until at last there is left but "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and:

"With all within me that I shrink from telling,  
I yet beneath Thy pitying gaze can stand:  
Stretch o'er me Lord for healing and for blessing  
Thy piercèd hand."

And then naked, and utterly ashamed, we hear it said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness"; and assurance begins to return, an assurance based not on our own poor strugglings, but on our readiness to recognize the primacy of the dominion of God in our lives—a recognition which is in truth "a pearl of great price."

If this is the common content of Christians' awareness, the Church of Christ, then, is no association

united by external sign or identical belief, but a motley company of beggars united in knowing just this—that their only wealth is in Him who “became poor,” and whose poverty makes many rich. That richness exists because “God that said ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” So wrote Paul to Corinth.

Is it all a dream? Yearly Christmas rebukes our littleness with its penetrating claim: “a little child shall lead them”; and for a space our dream comes true. It is “not very far” to Bethlehem, and some star calls us and we go; too soon, perhaps, to fall to the diversions of the way. And then the clouds of sophistication come down and the manger goes out of sight.

But our need remains, no clouds can banish that. Nothing—not even that child—can take away *at one stroke* the sufferings of men. But nothing can make us judge that all that suffering is good—that all is well in this puzzled world.

And yet we do not find ourselves implicated in some mocking confusion. Even though we may find or make the world a dark riddle, there remains the echo of the saga of Creation: “Behold it was very good.” And it *is* good. God *has* shined in our hearts, and through the years men *have* seen in the face of Jesus Christ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Our religion offers men a vision of God, *and summons men to pursue it.*<sup>3</sup> And if there be any truth in the offer, that pursuit is man’s highest opportunity. The story of the men of old puts it in a parable for us. The academic experts, the professors, the theologians, were all the time near to Bethlehem. And yet it was not they who recognized what was happening there. It was written *so*. *They* knew all

about it. No mystery, no imperious summons quickened their hearts. Deduction, reasoning and inference made up the sum of things and gave them the answer: "In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written . . ."; and then back to their books, while strangers took the road once more.

"We saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Camels, sand, trackless ways, hard living, and a shining light in their hearts: and then adoring giving at their absurd fantastic journey's end—a baby, a manger, the barn of some inn in an obscure village. How unreasonable it all was! How ridiculous to the professional theologian with his clear cut scheme of things! But how urgent and how true!

Do you want to rationalize it? Are you deaf to the poetry of the real? "It never happened just like that," you say. Perhaps not—yet are you sure? What is it in the tale that holds us hushed? Surely some echo of our inwardest knowing—that it is Jesus who kindles us to high endeavour: and that lasting peace and wholeness are ours only when we "offer and present" unto *Him* "ourselves, our souls and bodies." *There* is at once the power *and* the puzzle of our faith, the solvent of our distress, and the earnest of our triumph. For the distinctively Christian life begins, *not* with the intellectual assertion of the possibility of touch between God and man, *but* with a new personal relationship—a relationship wherein love inspires, transforms, enables and abides.

"With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness  
Kneel and adore Him, the Lord is His name."

## II

Let me sum up so far. This new relationship is personal in that it involves enthusiastic submissive

loyalty. He will claim not what we *choose* to give him, but all we have to give. He will require no faltering loyalty, but a following with no looking back. And it is personal, in that what attracts and draws us is not a concept, a proposition or an ethic. No, it is not to such that we come. Rather, we come to a babe in a manger, a boy at a carpenter's bench, a man in a boat, an awful agonizing figure in a garden, a shattered conqueror triumphant on a cross.

I have been arguing that the Christian life begins with a new personal relationship, and often one meets the objection: "Yes, I just don't know what you mean when you talk about approach to a person." I am now going to try to answer an objection like that; for it is important to be clear about what is involved in the Christian's claim to know now the presence of Jesus, because only so can we give valid grounds establishing the linkage from the present to the past.

Two preliminary matters stand out:

(a) Exhilaration is not the test of that presence. The full knowledge of the strength of human companionship comes not in the quick peak of friendship's joy, but in the desolate emptiness when the daily sure stay of that companionship is no more. And so it is with the companionship of Jesus.

(b) The idea of presence has more than a sensory and spatial content. It is arbitrary to limit presence to what we can see or feel or hear—to what we can locate "out there" in space. What gives the idea of presence its essential tone is the recognition of actual effectuation; for, in brief, a cause is present in its effect (e.g. a message or a telegram, a footprint or a picture).

This is no facile simplification—there is more in the Christian claim than recognition of long delayed

after effects; but at the start this wider meaning of presence needs emphasis. And our immediate concern is with the claim to know the presence of Jesus.

We may not avoid the issue. What kind of awareness is rightly labelled "presence"? At the outset we shall reject all that type of experience which has a spatial or a sensory reference. We shall reject it, not because we dogmatically assert it is not genuine, but because in fact it is not by the rare and abnormal that the normal is to be understood and explained. And, further, we shall remind ourselves that if there is anything in the Christian claim at all, if there is in any sense a real personal relationship at the centre of the Christian's life, the description of that relationship is bound to be difficult and inadequate. Ask yourselves how far you can analyse and define the security of comradeship or the steady warmth of love.

But though we recognize that difficulty, we may not hide behind it; and so once more to the question, "What kind of awareness is rightly called 'presence'?" Remembering the meaning of "presence," we shall see that no instructed Christian claims what we call spatial presence. That does not mean that conditions of time and space have no effect on our knowing. We call this church more "helpful" than that. One kind of service will bring more than another. This bad night and that indigestion will have their effect on our knowing. This beauty and that ugliness will not be without their results. All this is a matter of common experience. Our capacity for response, for understanding, for apprehension, varies indefinitely, and is in many ways intimately linked to the physical environment including our bodies. But the presence we say we know is not *in* the environment, it is known through it.

The telegram, the footprint, the picture—they are



not the presence. They are signs, effects, pointing to a cause beyond them, which they are not, but which is known, not directly, but in and through them. In them purposeful activity becomes manifest, and to one thus knowing them, the cause *is* really present. In a *real* world this inferential knowledge is every whit as convincing and constraining as direct sensation, and it is no misuse of language to call it knowledge. And this applies to the Christian's claim to know the presence of Jesus: we know, not spatial presence, but effectual presence.

*He does things.* Yes, but we are not there yet; we cannot say that yet. *Things are done*; of that there is no doubt. But how can we say "*He* does them"? What is it that we find happening? We have known ideals inspire us—many poets and painters have quickened us in this way. But the Christian does not stop there. He claims, as part of his experience, that challenging conviction and quickening strength come to him *from outside*. He claims that this conviction and this strength are daily renewed and renewable. And, though not everyone experiences this incoming strength as reaching him through exactly the same channels, most discover that its continued coming requires search and effort in ways common to a Community—that the activities of prayer and worship in some way determine its supply.

These are facts which no one can dispute. They may admit of more than one interpretation, but as facts, derived from the deepest knowings of men, they admit of no doubt. In a sentence—something happens which appears to come from outside, and the context of its happening is *the Community*.

Here is the major turning point in the line of thought I am putting before you. When we remember that our problem does not concern the actual

existence of individual experience, but the identification and reference of a *type* of experience, the importance of the society as a continuing link cannot be emphasized too strongly.

The facts, then, for the individual are not now in dispute. Our concern is to correlate them with Jesus as their real present cause. This linkage is recognized, not by an act of intellectual judgment, but by an individual's total response to touch with a living growth. Think of our membership of some ancient college. One who spends, say, three years there, does not get just the bare experience of those years. Because the college is a living society it transmits to its members the stored continuity of the centuries; and the honoured names of its past are not just inspiring benefactors of an earlier age, but figures active in the present, though often in ways unrecognizable—but active by that which they built into the society to which we come one by one.

So it is, but on an altogether higher level, with the Christian society. One by one in a diversity of ways we come to it; and in it, and it alone, find that continuity which links us to the past. The signs of its Founder's presence and the tokens of His power are at the centre of the society's knowing. In the days of His flesh men knew what He did for them and for others. When He triumphed over death there were those same men who again recognized that same presence in what was happening in them and around them. Others followed, and we in these days are at the end of that long line possessing that one common factor which constitutes its abiding unity—that this conviction of sin, that movement towards penitence, this challenge to action and endeavour, and, above all, these many kinds of real enabling, in love, and joy, and peace and militancy—these constitute that

which, all through the years since He walked in Galilee, men have known and acknowledged to be the marks of His presence and the signs of His power. The *society* knows: the *society* abides: and in the society and *not* in the individual is the guarantee of the source of the individual's private awareness. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—the words of the old text are familiar enough. But it is not to doctrinal expression that they apply, nor to theories of the nature of the ministry. Such do not constitute the enduring unity of the society. The *sensus communis fidelium* is expressed in simpler, deeper ways than those. The society is apostolic—for it reaches back to those who walked with Him: and it is apostolic, for in the present there is known to men through it that which men knew when they were with Him. And such knowledge is knowledge of His presence here and now: knowledge possessing a sureness which is not cocksureness:<sup>4</sup> and knowledge attesting, not only in the rare moments of quick exaltation, but also and especially in “all the din of working days,” the truth of the claim that He is “the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.”

Only against some such background as this can we rightly consider the movements of the Community's interpretations in the earliest centuries. Our knowing now conditions our understanding of theirs then. And so we pass to the earliest days.

### III

If we think ourselves back into the atmosphere of the first and second centuries so that we visit the little Communities at Antioch and Jerusalem, at Ephesus, Corinth and Rome, we should hear them say something that we can translate into the words of a hymn we sing now: “It is a thing most wonderful, Almost

too wonderful to be . . . And yet I know that it is true." In all these Communities we would have found a mixture of wonder and conviction, sure as to the fact that something had happened, but puzzled about how they were to interpret this fact. That same hymn from which I have already taken three lines itself gives us the interpretation that these Communities were reaching out to. And, if we fill in the two lines I left out, all the echoes of Nicæa and Chalcedon, of the turmoil of the fourth and fifth centuries, are ringing in our ears: "That God's own Son should come from Heaven; and die to save a child like me." There is interpretation; there is theology; there is doctrine. And that is very different from the fact of the primary wondering awareness with which the local Communities were filled.

The trials of the fourth and fifth centuries led to the use of words and phrases which took away some of the warmth of the primary experience of which they were interpretations, but "of one substance with the Father" is to be judged as a key phrase expressing, and held to be the only adequate way of formally expressing, the meaning of one side of a tremendous set of living facts. And, therefore, before embarking on an outline of the history leading up to the assertion of this phrase, it is necessary to spend a little time in examining the nature of belief in general. In all this we shall be tracing a living growth—the growth of an attempt to produce a statement which should satisfy the indubitable elements in experience. Something very wonderful had happened; so wonderful, so unique, so far-reaching in its effects and implications that old notions could not contain it. "For several centuries men were . . . groping in the dark to find a systematic expression of the faith that filled their

hearts. . . . Language was inadequate to portray . . . the full significance of the life which they had witnessed.”<sup>5</sup>

In the next lecture I shall be considering the facts as interpreted by the writers of the New Testament and by the thinkers of the early Church. For the remainder of this lecture I want to ask: What is the source of belief of any kind? To that the only possible answer is a very ordinary one; there is no other source than experience.<sup>6</sup> We do not start with ready-made ideas; we make them with the sweat of our brow, and out of the agony of perplexity; and the raw material for their making is experience—present awareness of something as indubitable.

Think yourselves out of ideas, and, if you can, into a primal diversity before ideas were. Think of blue—and blue again; of like, of fear, of hot and change, of awe and hard. In using the words themselves I am inevitably implying a developed standpoint, but what they express is the raw material for all thought and all knowledge: they express fundamental states of consciousness.

How is this worked up? How, from this relatively unformed material, do we make our bricks for building? Consider one obvious instance. If I am sitting in my garden, near a wall, on the far side of which is a road, and I hear a hoot, followed by a certain kind of noise, I interpret this indubitable bit of awareness as meaning that a motor is passing. But notice that, in so doing, I am unifying two things—the hoot and the noise, and I am interpreting them in terms of something that I do not know in the same sense as I know them. I am *reading in* a cause. And I may be mistaken. There may be a troop of small boys on the far side of the wall, whose occupation is to make noises representing motor cars, and I may

have interpreted the noise heard as meaning the presence of a motor car. But in general the interpretation "motor car" will be the one I naturally make, and to which I adhere, because I proceed on the assumption of a reasonable world, and the hypothesis "motor" most adequately co-ordinates the facts.

In this illustration it is important to notice how an existing idea, namely that of a motor, is used to effect the unification of several bits of experience, and that this interpretation will remain satisfactory until something comes along to upset it.

Imagine now that we are birds, and that as birds we are frightened when we see a man. That is why a scarecrow will also frighten birds, because for them it has the meaning "man." But think of yourself as either a very brave, or else a very foolish bird who perched on the scarecrow and found that all was well. You would then, if you could think, be saying to yourself, "This is like a man, but it isn't." In other words, your existing interpretation would be inadequate to your new experience. All progress in common knowledge and in science is made in this way.

Just now I showed how there might be more than one way of interpreting and unifying experience, and our method is nearly always like that of the bold or foolish bird—one of trial and error<sup>7</sup>—involving sometimes success and sometimes failure. The building up of knowledge is like the building up of a jig-saw puzzle, or the solving of a detective problem. It is possible, theoretically, that the pieces in the one, or the facts in the other, may go together in more than one way, but only one way is the most reasonable. That is to say, we assume that the jig-saw makes a picture, and so we hold that that way of unifying the bits, which makes them form a picture and not a muddle, is the right way; and we cannot be satisfied

until the bits do make a picture ; that is, until we have discovered a reasonable unity and meaning in the variety of bits taken as a whole.

This illustration holds all along the range of possible experience. If we are not reasonable, or if we start by believing the jig-saw to be just an unrelated collection, we do not expect a picture, i.e. what we do with our facts and how we interpret them depends not a little on what we are. A sieve will only let through bits smaller than its mesh, and from the size of the biggest bits we can know the size of the mesh without seeing it. And in just the same way not only will our judgments and beliefs often *show* what we are, but also they will always *depend* on what we are. And so, in general, moral factors will influence our interpretation of facts.

If we observe another's action (that is the fact) our inference from it to his motive (i.e. our interpretation) will depend on our character, i.e. on what would induce us to do the same act. This shows what a complex thing knowledge is. It is not just photography, but building, and we who build have to build ourselves into what we construct. And with all this complexity, mistakes in our building are not surprising. Just now, under the figure of birds and a scarecrow, I tried to show how new experience often shows the inadequacy of previous explanation, and so compels a new one. In this sense the earlier explanation is a mistake, but a valuable one, for its incompatibility with the new facts produced an advance towards truth.

And this, in our special province, is the case with what we call heresy—though the word now is far from being as neutral as it ought to be. Heresies “constitute one of the most impressive instances” of what might almost be called the “law that the ultimate

attainment of the many is rendered possible only by the failure of the few, that final success is conditioned by previous defeat." In their way "heresies have rendered no small service" to theology, for "subtle objections when carefully weighed, and half truths when exposed, became the occasion for more accurate statements": for by the inadequacies in interpretations of the early theologians "the general feeling of the faithful—the great common sense of the Catholic Church—was aroused, and set to work to find some phrase which would exclude the error and save the members of the Church in future from falling into a like mistake."<sup>8</sup>

"By the inadequacies the general feeling of the faithful was aroused"—that sentence expresses my last point. In five words—knowledge is a social product—the explanation or interpretation *generally accepted* as being the best interpretation of the facts is regarded as true: and so of it, it can be said, "It seems good because it has been generally agreed upon, and so it is dogma." And this is because, and only because, it is generally accepted. In other words our private experience can find its full interpretation not in the narrow field of our personal explanations, but in the wider synthesis of common experience.

So in studying the growth of the creeds we trace a process of the exclusion of erroneous interpretation. "Individuals had drawn their inferences too hastily: fuller knowledge, longer deliberations, and consideration of all the consequences which would flow from their conclusions showed them to be misleading, inadequate to account for all the facts."<sup>9</sup>

If you ask what is the present lesson of all this, it is that, for us as Christians, worship in a society is fundamental; for not only is it our duty, but, in that it is a main source of our experience of God, it is



also a solvent of perplexities. And to say, "I will not worship till my difficulties are solved," is as foolish as it would be to say, "I will shut my eyes till I am quite sure I know the exact truth about everything in the world."

### III. SOME OF THE COMMUNITY'S INTERPRETATIONS. 2.

I HAVE been urging that the Christian Church is a Community owing its origin to an act of God for man's redemption, and having as its primary duty the worship of the God who created it. This worship is the ground of experience which needs interpretation—experience which has its focus in Jesus "the carpenter's son," and which leads on to an interpretation of Him as one who "was before all things," and in whom "all things consist."

In the last lecture I discussed, first, the kind of loyalty and attraction evoked from men in the past and from us in the present by that same Jesus. Then I tried to show how our claim to have present knowledge of Him could be justified only in the context of a worshipping Community; and finally I discussed some of the considerations preliminary to any understanding of the nature of belief, and suggested that if we thought of the process leading to belief as that of the unification and interpretation of indubitable experience in what seems to be the most reasonable way, we should observe two facts important for our present study. First, that heresies have been of great value to the expression of belief; and second, that private experience finds its full interpretation in the wider synthesis of common experience. Or, to put it in less formal language—that it is only as members of a worshipping Community that we understand what we feel, for knowledge is a social product.

And now I can begin the history of these earliest attempts at interpretation; and we must begin, as

I reminded you in the first lecture, with the New Testament, which itself is interpretation; for the simple reason that interpretation is rooted in the struggle to find words to express what is indubitably known. All I can attempt is an altogether inadequate outline of a tremendous set of facts—the facts which demanded unification and interpretation, and of which we read in the Epistles and the Gospels and in Acts. These facts were of two kinds, the basic and the abnormal, and I will say something about each kind.

As to the former, the first essential set of facts to be remembered is all that system of thought and practice which was Judaism. Judaism is presupposed by the New Testament, and to attempt to remove the New Testament from a context of Judaism is to attempt that which will end in emptying the New Testament of all meaning. Within that general framework of Judaism there are four subsidiary points that require notice :

(1) Judaism was essentially monotheistic. The God of the Jews was utterly one; He was not an aloof distant God, He was “a very present help”; yet He was one who was safely approachable only with a care which was partly ritual, but mainly ethical.

(2) This God was the God who had created the world, and who had pronounced it to be “very good.” Everything that existed was in some sense grounded in Him; and so for the Jew it could never be true to say, or to imply, that the world was essentially evil, even though he might know only too well that the devil was very strong and mankind very weak.

(3) As I have shown in the first lecture, there was in Judaism, in a diversity of forms, an expectation of

divine intervention which should vindicate the exclusive position the Jews claimed for their race. They were the chosen of God; God would not let His people down.

(4) The whole vocabulary of the New Testament is conditioned by its Jewish background, and it is specially important to remember this when we seek to understand the meaning of the sacrificial ideas in the New Testament, that is, the ideas dealing with the mode of man's access to a holy God, and of that God's impartation of His life to the Community of His worshippers. And, in general, a cardinal principle for interpreting Jewish metaphor concerns itself primarily not with the details of a process, but with the *result* of that process. So that, for example, the idea expressed in the word "ransom" is primarily concerned with the deliverance from bondage and captivity, and not with the details of how much was paid and to whom the price was paid. Failure to recognize this characteristic of Hebrew thought is fraught with grave danger for the understanding of the New Testament.

The second, utterly simple yet overwhelmingly important, fact was that Jesus was a Man. It may seem unnecessarily obvious to emphasize this, but the later history that we shall be looking at further on in this lecture illustrates only too clearly that it is not. Whatever else they may have found in Him, He began as a Man and He continued as a Man—a Man and a friend. Yet He was unlike other men whom they knew, for in knowing Him they found they knew more of themselves and more of God. He was a Man, yet He was a mysterious Man, and any attempt to eliminate the numinous from our records does violence to them, because the main suggestions of mystery which we find throughout the records in the

New Testament of the ministry of Jesus are by no means explicable in terms of later writing up. Finally He was a Man who made claims, and who made claims explicitly about Himself in the way He spoke about Himself—differentiating Himself from others, claiming for Himself a single-minded allegiance, and asserting for Himself a special place in the Kingdom. And He was a Man who made claims implicitly, of the kind that we looked at in the last lecture—claims in His authority exercised over men's minds and bodies, in His declaration of forgiveness, and in His overriding of the law and its traditions.

We have here what I have called the basic facts. They were certainly startling, but yet they were capable of interpretation in terms of existing ideas. But pressing hard upon them came others demanding a new synthesis.

He "was dead and is alive again." We must keep it stark and simple. However perplexing we may perhaps find it when we think in terms of "how," the New Testament is unintelligible until we realize that words as simple as these express what the earliest Christians believed to be true. There is the substance of Christianity; not in the Sermon on the Mount, but in belief in a living Lord who had overcome death. That, they held, guaranteed His uniqueness, because only the direct act of God could account for it. So God must henceforth be interpreted in terms of Jesus as they knew Him, risen. And always note the definiteness of Jesus. Time and time again we find the name of His flesh woven into their experience of Him risen.

But there was more than this; there was the experience of a new access to God through the removal of the load of their sin—a removal causally associated by them with Jesus' death. Their new

access was nothing less than a new life, and they spoke of it as salvation; and, seeking to account for it along lines native to their thought, they spoke variously of the death as having effected their ransom, or reconciliation, or of satisfaction or propitiation; or they pointed wonderingly to Isaiah liii, saying, "Read this, that is what has happened." But there was no attempt at answering "how." "The love of God at its highest met the sin of men at its worst":<sup>1</sup> God had done something, and that something came to a head in Jesus' death. That was enough. God had acted—that action, and nothing they did, had created the Community of the redeemed.

For, with this lifting of the load of sin from each one of them, they felt themselves drawn together into a unity of which Jesus was the centre, in which Jesus still lived, and by which He continued to show Himself to the world. In this new society there was a diversity of gifts, but they were felt all to proceed from the same source. And outside the society men were looked upon as "having no hope," not through any intolerance on the part of the Christians, but simply because it was a matter of fact that hope had come to them in Jesus, and Jesus' continued presentness was experienced at its fullness, not individually or in isolation, but in the society. Baptism, which conferred membership, thus became of supreme importance, as did the regular renewal of their sense of sharing a common life outwardly expressed in their sacred meal.

And with all these amazing facts, there was one yet more amazing. They had known Jesus the Man. Now and increasingly they found that they, Jews though they were, could offer to Him, present in the way He was among them, that worship which hitherto had been for God alone. Godhead and manhood,

normally known by them separately, were somehow, if they could trust their experience, found in conjunction in Him; and later experience talked of Him who was "of one substance with the Father" as having been "made man."

Such were the facts: an expectant monotheistic background; Jesus, the Man, and His claim; Jesus "was dead and is alive again"; Jesus saves us by His death; in Jesus we are all united together; and, we do worship Jesus.

And those indubitable facts of experience could not be interpreted and unified in terms of the old ideas. Something utterly new had happened. The earliest attempts at explanation developed Peter's confession. Jesus was Messiah, and the scriptures were searched for what might seem to be predictions of events in His life. But the inadequacy of this was not long in making itself felt, and very soon we find varying assertions, not explaining the "how," but making the only postulate which could be held to account for the facts.

Two of the earliest of these assertions so commended themselves to the corporate judgment of the Christian Community that they have ever since been central in the vocabulary of Christians. One was the simple assertion, "Jesus is Lord." The significance of this lies in the history of the Greek word used for Lord. *Kurios* originally is one who has power or authority, and not infrequently it was a title of respect similar to our English "Sir." But when Christians used it of Jesus, it had acquired a very special meaning, for two reasons. The less important was that it was often used as a title for the divinities of the many religious cults which flourished round the Eastern Mediterranean at this time. But the far more important fact was that the Greek translators of the Hebrew Bible

had used the word *Kurios* to translate two of the common Hebrew words meaning "God." And this is of great significance in estimating what the earliest Greek-speaking Jewish Christians meant when they tried to interpret and unify their experience of Jesus by calling Him *Kurios* or Lord.

The other of the two assertions is equally familiar to us now. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Two reasons combine to make the idea contained in *Logos* a suggestive method of interpretation. On the one hand, in the Old Testament the spoken utterance of Jehovah is frequently personified, and in later Jewish writings, like Wisdom, God's wisdom is more and more regarded as distinguishable from God, and as the means of His working in the world. On the other hand, in Greek thought, and especially in that fusion of Greek and Jewish thought which grew up at Alexandria, the word *Logos* was used to express the Divine Reason manifested in the universe, and to explain how God came into relation with the world. So both to Jew and Greek, *Logos*, or the idea it represented, had a suggestive background; though once it was applied to the Christian interpretation of Jesus it acquired a content far more profound than it had in either of its sources, and subsequent history is largely concerned with the attempt to determine this content.

I have stated six facts, which, as facts, cannot be disputed by the most violent opponent of Christianity. I have also stated two of the earliest interpretations of those facts—interpretations which have won increasing allegiance through the centuries since they were first put forward. But acceptance of these interpretations meant believing that something had hap-



pened which was "almost too wonderful to be," and many in their perplexity tried to find something less amazing and less challenging; so that it was three hundred years before anything like agreement was reached. And in that great space of time there is assurance for us now, who may sometimes think that our private perplexities are unreasonably long. The Christian Church has never taught that a solitary individual could alone and at once know "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The pledge of His divinity is not in logic, but in the common mind of the faithful; and to a seeker—and all of us are such—it urges that the way to understanding is not by waiting outside till all is clear, but by entry into the society, sharing its life and practices, enjoying its privileges and adventuring in search of the "pearl of great price." And that is especially the character of the first century—a fresh adventuring with a dominant note of exultant wonder: "The Lord hath done great things for us."

In the second century there was a hardening. Present experience was less vivid, the faith was becoming a system of propositions, and we find traces of entanglement in subtleties which are merely verbal. But the fact that the thought is less keenly alive does not mean that it can be disregarded; for the second century had its contribution to make to that process of interpretative development which ended in the statement that the *Logos*, incarnate in Jesus, was "of one substance with the Father."

In the second century "Christianity was misunderstood intellectually, and maligned morally."<sup>2</sup> Persecution was not infrequent. It was not irresponsible and capricious, but, though local, deliberate, and usually based upon a considered judgment, for the emperors were good men. In face of this, Christian

thinkers were primarily engaged in constructive defence of their position in relation to a pagan and hostile state and society; but our present concern is not so much with this as with developments in the interpretation of the life of Jesus within the Christian Community itself.

Two of these will claim our attention now. They are examples of the influence of race and geography on this process of explanation, and they are developments "off the line," so to speak—interpretations which were rejected as being inadequate. Each started with a real and important truth, but isolated it; and some consideration of the society's treatment of this one-sided isolation is important, for it serves to indicate the common mind of the faithful about what was indubitable. The ordinary analogy of a pendulum is helpful. From the extremes of its swing facts about the midpoint may be known; and the two developments we shall now consider are one at each extreme of a swing. On the one hand we find the isolation of the humanity of the Redeemer, and on the other the isolation of what I fear I must clumsily call His non-humanity. And both were unacceptable to the mind of the faithful, who, in the language of Chalcedon, still three centuries ahead, confessed "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, to be acknowledged of two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without division, never to be separated."

As one would expect, Judaism influenced the *expression* of belief about Jesus, but the remarkable thing is that it influenced it so little. The first of the two one-sided interpretations we are considering came from those who were saturated in a Jewish background. This led them to emphasize two things: that in matters of practice, observance of the law was

necessary for salvation ; and that in matters of belief, because the unity of God was primary, only manhood was to be found in the Redeemer.

We have already noticed the facts which constrained the earliest believers to find in Jesus something more than could be explained in terms of humanity alone ; and these Ebionites, for so these Judaizing interpreters came to be called, were forced, if they wished to deny the inferences from those facts, to deny the validity of the basic experiences themselves. In fact they were the first of a long succession of people who may not unfairly be called dogmatic modernists. For the real cleavage in history is between those on the one side who have said, "Come what may, I have found in Jesus an object of worship," and those on the other who say, "Your experience must be wrong, for Jesus is a man, and you can't worship a man." It is the latter and not the former who are dogmatists.

The importance of these second century interpreters is not great—save negatively. The "poor" conception of Jesus they held found little favour, and the scant respect paid to their opinions is abundant evidence of the society's firm belief in the Lordship of Jesus. And there, with other ancient and modern humanists, we may leave them.<sup>3</sup>

The other eccentric development was far more profound and important. Its character and quality are largely due to geographical factors, and, in particular, to the close contact between the Eastern Mediterranean on the one hand and Persia and India on the other ; Mesopotamia being where East and West met.

To understand this phase of Christian thought we must begin with one of the fundamental questions of religion : What is evil ? For this question the Jews had no real answer. They were sure that the source

of evil was not in matter. They were equally sure that the existence of evil in some way depended on a disorderly and disobedient self. But their perplexity was such that their belief in one sole omnipotent God could sometimes lead them to speak of God as causing or creating evil.

The Greek was different. For the most part (and generalizing is dangerous) he seriously and thoughtfully denied the essential reality of evil. Evil was, for example, sometimes thought of as the absence of good; and, since good could not be thought of without the possibility of its absence, evil, it was argued, was necessary to perfection. You see how their criterion of goodness was not transcendent, but lay in the quality of the present; and this being so, the missing of the mark was not for them the starting point of a compellingly mysterious problem.

But from the East came stern insistence on the inescapable reality of evil, and this in two forms. Hindu thought put spirit and matter at opposite ends of the scale of being, and thought of matter as not really being at all, but as evil in the sense of being at the farthest remove from what was truly real. Persian thought asserted an original and continued existence of two antagonistic powers of good and evil. Matter was the product of the good power, but the evil power had got a footing and had made matter the scene of a struggle. Though fundamentally different, the practical conclusion of these two modes of thought agreed: matter, as men knew it, was evil.<sup>4</sup>

This belief moved from the East westwards, and met another—that Jesus is Redeemer. The two fused; and, in brief, interpretation of this kind resulted in theories about Jesus as the Redeemer of spirit from the thralldom of matter. There was a wide diversity of thought in this Gnostic movement: it

embraced a variety of mixed religious and pseudo-philosophic thinking which purported to show Jesus as the key to a system of knowledge, whereby men could escape from matter. But, for the Church, it was a serious internal danger. These interpreters were religious—they took a figure called Jesus and made Him central to their thought, and they raised questions which were serious and important. But the consequences of their thought were far reaching, and to understand the importance of the issue and the reasons for their rejection, we must consider them.

If matter is evil, then the world is neither good nor the work of God. Rather is it the clumsy handicraft of some subordinate; and man's need is for redemption from contamination by this ineptitude. Redemption, then, is conceived as being from ignorance rather than from sin—a point which illustrates not only the character of these interpreters, but also their conception of the character of the Redeemer. And, again, if matter is evil, either man's duty is to avoid it so far as he can by the sternest asceticism, or, since he is *in* a body and nothing that he does can affect the sordidness of his environment, the extremes of license are ethically indifferent. And, in any case, the idea of matter as being of sacramental import is wholly unthinkable.

The consequences of this position are serious. Some of these Gnostics almost reluctantly allowed a human nature to Jesus, but, sharply distinguishing Jesus from the Christ, mangled history by asserting that the Christ descended upon Jesus at the baptism and left Him before the Passion. Others, more true to their assertion of the radical badness of matter, denied that Godhead could conjoin with manhood in human flesh, saying that the humanity of Jesus was nonexistent, and that His flesh and His sufferings in His

flesh were nothing but appearance and phantasy. And all because of that whence came their name, their emphasis on the primacy of knowledge, in effect denied the possibility of salvation to the unlettered.

They, again, were the dogmatists. Given the truth of their starting point, these things may possibly be logically deduced. But deduction and fact do not always agree, and then it is so much the worse for deduction. And because it was indubitable that there was suffering, and that the Sufferer and the Redeemer were one and the same, and that the unlettered were in fact made whole, the various interpretations of the Gnostics were rejected as inadequate to account for the facts.

But for the most part they were serious men propounding serious problems, and they command our respect. For the results of the struggle with them are of lasting importance, and can be summarized in five points.

(1) Their refutation emphasized the institutional characteristics of the Community. Creeds were developed, the canon of Scripture more definitely determined, and the authority of the ministry more clearly asserted.

(2) Their refutation rooted Christianity more firmly than ever in history. For they identified their bungling subordinate with the creator God of the Old Testament, thereby cutting Christianity right off from Judaism. And when the Church asserted that the God and Father of Jesus was the Creator of the world it was asserting its own historical continuity with the remote past of Hebrew history.

(3) The refutation of their sundering of the divine into higher and lower grades emphasized the truth of the unity of God; and, as we shall see later, this

emphasis went too far, to the point of denying actually experienced diversity within the Godhead.

(4) By their refutation the all-important truth of the essential goodness of matter was asserted. And the mode of their refutation is worth noting. It was not a case of "Matter is good, therefore an incarnation is possible," but of "Jesus is Lord, therefore matter is good." And on that truth stands all the wealth of sacramental practice.

(5) And, finally, by their refutation the real universality of the gospel of Jesus was powerfully asserted. It is not the monopoly of the lettered. Nevertheless there is, of course, a place for thought: to deny that would be but to invert the Gnostic claims to a privileged aristocracy. But the Catholic assertion of universality is based on something far deeper, and the starting point for everyone is the same: "*All* have sinned, and fall short . . ." No, further than that: "*I* have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," and then, as a little child, certain of the "what" but trustfully content to be largely ignorant of the "how," there come the words of simplest profundity:

"He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good."

\* \* \* \*

In the second century the earliest of the more formal attempts to answer the "how" of Jesus' life were made, and we have examined two of them. We noticed: (i) the obscuring of the essential simplicity of the "what"; (ii) the earliest growth of creeds, to exclude interpretations judged inadequate by the common sense of Christians. In the third century the quest of the "how" was continued. We

shall now trace a movement of thought spreading over most of that century, in the West as well as in the East. The immediate cause of this movement was reaction from Gnosticism. Gnosticism can be summed up as a highbrow intellectualism dealing with a variety of superhuman beings who were engaged in what was really the redemption of man from matter or ignorance, but certainly not from his own sin. It was *essentially* far removed from polytheism, but *practically* it was polytheistic—all the beings were gods of one kind or another.

In opposition to Gnosticism the Church (i) developed its organization to meet the attack upon it; (ii) attacked highbrow exclusiveness, and emphasized the sole need of faith; and (iii) stressed monotheism and all its implications: that is, God is the sole source of all that is, including matter; and God is utterly singular and unique.

This opposition of the Church had its consequences along two lines. Along one line a point was reached when the emphasis on the gift of the divine inspiration to the faithful individual outran and rejected the emphasis on the importance of the divine Community—the Church: and the result was a revivalist movement, at first within the Church, which was increasingly anti-institutional in character. This began in Asia Minor and was called Montanism. Its history does not concern us now.

But the other line of opposition is important for us. The emphasis on monotheism in face of the incipient polytheism of Gnosticism went too far, and this over-swing produced the next development to be considered—Monarchianism, i.e. assertions about the sole source or rule of God. To this as a principle all agreed, but



the conclusions drawn were disputed. We must recall two cardinal facts :

- (1) God was one : monotheism was certain ; and
- (2) Jesus had beyond all doubt been known as a Man.

They presented a paradox, and to resolve it two possibilities were open, both involving denials.<sup>5</sup>

(1) It was possible to deny the full personal divinity of the Redeemer (cf. Ebionism)—and thereby to keep the monarchy of God. These thinkers (and the fact that one whose name has been remembered was a leather seller, and another a banker, shows a little of the wide range of the appeal of theology then) held that Jesus began as a Man and no more, and was more and more filled with the *power* of God until He somehow got the status of God.

We can compare the filling of a bucket with water. The water is just any water, drawn from a wider mass of water ; and the water in the bucket has no specific unity with or relation to the bucket, except the accident that this bucket happens to hold it. So it was for these thinkers with the *Logos*, which was neither pre-existent nor personal. It was just as much divinity as that particular individual could hold ; and the union between the Godhead and Jesus as conceived by these interpreters was one of *will*.<sup>6</sup>

(2) The other denial which was concerned to preserve the monarchy was far more subtle and far more enduring. It took many forms and some of them involved a refinement of philosophic detail which I cannot possibly consider now ; but, put crudely, these thinkers denied the individual existence of the Redeemer apart from the Father. By this denial they preserved both monotheism and the full divinity of Jesus Christ, but at the cost of His

individual personality, for they regarded Him as a mode or aspect, or manifestation for a particular purpose, of God the Father. For them the *Logos* was but another name for God at work in revelation: it was a role assumed, or a part played for a particular purpose, but it had no essential basis in the eternal being of God.

This type of thought began in Asia Minor and Egypt, and spread to the West, and was the cause of much confusion in the fourth century. Though native to the East, it found the thought of the West more congenial, for in the West belief in the unity of the divine being was strong. The East probably saw further into the implications of this type of interpretation, and feared the loss of the personal distinctions within the Godhead which it involved. For long years, to suggest in the East that anyone held these views damned him, and as, by the mischance of the terminology used, it was easy for Greeks to think that Latins were upholding this Monarchian standpoint, when in fact they often were not, relations between the East and West were made very difficult.

But we must not go further into this part of the subject. Let us return to consider why neither of these two denials satisfied Christian experience and reflection.

(a) One denial was that of the full *personal* divinity. No theory of high pressure injection of divinity into the Man Jesus could ever avoid the position that at some time in His life there was no divinity in Him. And this cut clean across the traditions of the society, which asserted that ever since He was as man in Him had dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And again, the denial of real personal divinity cut at the roots of the possibility of Christian worship. "We do worship

Jesus, really individually personal": that was their basic experience; and so the theory was no good. And in any case, there is no uniqueness possible under this theory. If one man can become God, others can too: and we may as well become polytheists at once.

(b) Christian experience made short shrift of this "dynamic Monarchianism." It took longer to reject decisively "modalistic monarchianism," as the denial of the individual existence of the Redeemer was called. There were philosophic perplexities to be met; they can be put crudely in the assertion that according to this view, when Jesus was on earth, there was no God in heaven. But as well as these, there was left the apparent conclusion that there was nothing *essential* about the individual personality of Jesus—that that which made Him *this* and *not that* was accidental and not fundamental. And this, Christians came more and more to see, was inconsistent with their experience. To hold a view involving a transitory personality in Christ is to think of Him as playing a part, forgotten when the play is over: and that is in flat contradiction to our glad conviction that: "We touch Him in life's throng and press, And we are whole again."

So both views were rejected as inadequate to account for the facts of experience. But for those in search of the "how" the difficulty remained. With what concept can you unify the two ideas of the unity of God and the full personal divinity of Jesus the Redeemer? The concept lay near at hand, and the development of the idea of the *Logos*, or word of God, proved to be the way out of the perplexity. It had always been held that the *Logos* was incarnate in Jesus, but *Logos* had remained a fluid term, and in early thought it was often held that the *Logos* became personal only in connexion with creation—that there

was nothing essentially characteristic of Godhead about his personality.

Christian experience was now forcing thinkers, in refutation of interpretations patently inadequate, to assert the essential and eternal personality of the *Logos*: in other words it is not scripture but the indubitable elements of experience which are at the back of the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. But the time for that was not yet ripe. These Monarchian interpretations we have been considering were refuted, but their refutation emphasized the existence of distinctions within the Godhead, and so made it easy, on an overswing, for men to think of those distinctions in terms of gradation or subordination. And this is what, in fact, we find happening.

But in the meantime the work of thinking out the idea of the *Logos* went on, especially at Alexandria, until a point was reached when the advance in development of expression could be retained, while the philosophical difficulties could at the same time be dropped, by substituting the idea of Sonship for that of *Logos*. This had an advantage in that it was a familiar idea, and it also had ethical qualities attaching to it. And (rashly to sum up a long process) it may be said that now the issue was passing *away* from assertions about experience *to* postulates to explain experience: and one of these postulates was that, if it were true, as experience showed it was, to say "God is Love," then He must from all eternity have had an adequate object for His love who could be none other than one who was in His own being God. In other words, here you have argument coming to the conclusion long ago reached by simple Christian experience.

This has necessarily been a very condensed discussion, but I will sum up in three heads the primary

points to be learnt from these Monarchian attempts to rationalize Christian experience, which I have been considering.

(1) Christian experience leaves no room for any theories which involve the gradual divinization of an already human Jesus. The union of divine and human is a point event and always complete.

(2) Christian experience leaves no room for theories which obscure or deny the real personal individual identity of Jesus. The mother felt grow in her womb one who always was a real personal Child.

(3) Christian experience shows that asking "how" about these things may be inevitable, but is often a test of faith, in that no answer is open to our minds. And we do well to remember in our perplexity one question and its answer: "How shall this be?" "With God nothing shall be impossible."

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In this lecture we have been tracing in outline that process of trial and error which ended in the generally agreed conviction that only one form of words was suitable for the formal expression of what Christians thought about Jesus. His life and all their experience associated with it demanded interpretation. *What* they experienced was indubitable. Existing ideas could not hold it, and their coincident experience of manhood and Godhead in relation to Him forced them to re-think their ideas of Godhead so as to leave room for essential personal distinctions within the divine. And when they had done this, the only way of talking about Jesus their Lord was to use the phrase "of one substance with the Father," meaning that in *being* and essential reality He and the Father were one.

But we have not yet looked at the last controversy

which gave the phrase its permanent significance. We have seen the earliest facts and their earliest and most enduring interpretations. We have seen two one-sided second century attempts; one, Ebionism, dogmatically denying the possibility that more than manhood could be found in Jesus: and the other, Gnosticism, disregarding sin, degrading matter, and losing the Redeemer in endless celestial genealogies. We have seen the positive, but still inadequate, development in Monarchianism—positive, in that its emphasis on the unity of God prepared the way for the theology of the fourth century; inadequate, in that it failed in one form to preserve the divinity, and in the other the eternal individuality of the Redeemer: yet a development, in that the recognition of its inadequacy concentrated the thought of theologians on the working out of the ideas of *Logos* or Son, and showed them that the need was to find a way of expressing the actuality of distinctions within the Godhead—distinctions which should not be fleeting and transitory, but essential and personal. This may sound terribly formal: the basis of it can be simply stated—the naked fact that Christians found in the Man Jesus evidence warranting their belief that in Him there was “God in man made manifest.”

In discussing Monarchianism I mentioned how the swing away from those inadequate interpretations went too far. This we have seen happening before. In this case we find that, here and there, there is clear evidence that insistence on the Lord's divinity was leading back to polytheism.<sup>7</sup> But this was not widespread. There remained one other way of attempting to explain or to unify the facts, which still preserved the monarchy of God as well as—so its upholders for the most part honestly thought—the claims Christians made for Jesus. And this possibility had to be

propounded and rejected—not without many years of acute distress—before the phrase “of one substance with the Father” could command the almost unwilling acceptance of the Church.

Put in its shortest form, this last and most dangerous attempt at interpretation was as follows: there was, so it was said, in Jesus a supernatural invasion of the natural order, but the uniqueness of God precluded His doing it Himself. The *Logos* or Son was God’s intermediary between Himself and the world, and was made for the purpose of this mediation in creation and incarnation. It is clear what this means: it means that the *Logos* or Son, who became incarnate, is a creature (although unlike other creatures) and as such is subordinate, and so not essentially and eternally divine.

It is easy for us to see the danger and the inadequacy of such a view. It is easy for us to see its affinities with earlier interpretations we have discussed, and how skilfully it avoids their most obvious weaknesses. But we have the advantage of sixteen centuries, and it is difficult for us to overestimate the debt we owe to the little handful of theologians of the fourth century who, handicapped by the dead weight of Christian opinion which did not understand the issues involved and wanted no change, faced on the one side acute philosophic rationalism, and on the other side the place-seeking devices of politically-minded ecclesiastics and the persecution of theologically-minded emperors, and made a permanent place in the creed for the phrase which, though most Christians knew it not, was alone adequate to express the implications of their experience.

The historical origin of the controversy was in Alexandria in 317, though the ancestry of the thought can be traced back to Antioch to a considerably

earlier date. One, Arius, a parish priest, gave his name to this type of thought, and, although most of our information comes from the possibly biased accounts of opponents, it seems that he had solid grounds for the perplexity which led him to state his views. Two ideas, which were basic for him, were the unity and uniqueness of the deity, and the subordination of the Son. The former was the common property both of philosophers and of Christians of Monarchian leanings; the latter was peculiar to Christians, and prevalent in Alexandria. For Origen of Alexandria, a century earlier, had taught what could be interpreted as this subordination, and his work was of immense influence.

It seems that Arius was making an honest attempt at interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Starting from the thought of the uniqueness of God, he would say of the *Logos* or Son that he must be a created being, for if *He* existed eternally *God* would not be unique: or, again, that if God Himself created the world He would not be unique, and so He made the *Logos* or Son to do it for Him, thereby preserving His divine isolation. Or, starting from the idea of Sonship, Arius would urge that we must accept the doctrine seriously and inquire what Sonship really meant. And, arguing literally, he would say that the idea of Father and Son implies inevitably the priority of the Father. Therefore there once was no Son: therefore the Son is created and inferior. And as a creature the Son is capable of moral change. The Son or *Logos*, then, was a finite creature (although created out of time, so Arius argued, but I do not know what he meant), and took the place of the human soul in the body of the Man Jesus. And so the Redeemer was neither divine nor human, but a created though supernatural being in possession of a human body.



It is not my purpose to discuss the details of the history of the controversy which hinged on views such as these. Starting in Alexandria, and becoming a matter of popular interest there, it soon became of sufficient importance to warrant the intervention of the emperor, who saw in it the possibility of the destruction of that peace and unity within the empire for which he was working. He summoned the Council of Nicæa; and though the creed used in the Eucharist, and commonly called the Nicene Creed, is not the creed of that council, its crucial phrases were the work of the council. It was seen that the issue was now one for experts, and that the need was not only for negative rejection of the inadequate, but for positive statement as well. And the problem was to find what positive statement would work; and the central phrase used for this purpose was the Greek word translated "of one substance." A local creed was taken and revised in this way by the insertion of this and other phrases emphasizing the same idea, and to this creed were added several explicit denunciations of Arian views. This the council passed in 325. But the politico-ecclesiastical complications of the time prolonged the controversy. There was widespread opposition to the new test word "of one substance." Philosophical theologians said that the word implied that there was some substance or being "prior both to Father and Son, which they shared in common,"<sup>9</sup> and that they were therefore derived. Historical theologians either on the one side reminded Christians that a Monarchian had used the word to express his views, and that his views had been judged wrong;<sup>9</sup> or, on the other, invoked the authority of Origen in support of the view that the Son was subordinate to, and so could not be of one substance with, the Father. And the vast mass of simple souls, both lay and cleric, just said, "It isn't in the Bible, and so it's bad."

These were objections to the new phrase, not expressions of approval of Arian views; and, to cut a long story short, it was not until 357 these views showed themselves as they really were, in a creed which for all practical purposes declared that the Son was *unlike* the Father. This "Blasphemy" accelerated the growth of opposition, and the next turning point came five years later when Athanasius at Alexandria reconciled some important men hitherto at variance by showing them that their differences were only verbal. In this way, by reaction and the growth of understanding, the Catholic strength was mustered. In the meantime, the creed of Jerusalem was revised by its bishop with phrases from the creed of Nicæa newly-understood as a result of the conference of 362. This revised creed found its way to Cyprus, where we meet it in 374, and then at last in 381 it somehow found place in the proceedings of the Council at Constantinople which finally showed the falsity of Arian views; and in a little while came into use before the Eucharist to guard against Arian intruders.<sup>10</sup>

There is little more that needs saying. One fact stands out from this history: that it is dangerous to be blasé, it is dangerous to be dogmatic. Something unique has been happening, and only the approach of the child, ready to accept what just *is*, is adequate to the apprehension of so stupendous a mystery. What seems insoluble for our forms of thought is the coincidence of eternity and time in the Man Jesus or, to put it otherwise, how a particular individual event can have cosmic universal significance. But that, I repeat, is a problem for our forms of thought, not a reason for doubting the facts which set us the problem. And the facts are as simple as they are wonderful.

"It is a thing most wonderful. . . . That God's

own Son should come from heaven, And die to save a child like me." That is theology, but observe once more the way of its growth. The argument is *not* "If Christ is divine, then redemption is possible," *but* "Redemption is matter of fact, so the Redeemer is divine." In other words, the basis of our recognition of this mystery, and the pledge of its truth for us now is, first, penitent awareness of our sins which were the cause of the good Lord's passion, and next humble worship of Him that "taketh away the sins of the world."

And when creeds and theology lose their livingness, as sometimes they may, we do well to return to the early centuries, and ask whether any other phrase than "of one substance with the Father" satisfies either the facts faced by the pioneer interpreters, or our own undisciplined conviction.

## IV. THE COMMUNITY'S WORSHIP

### I. EUCHARIST

IN these lectures I am arguing that the Church as the act of God is no human institution, and that its nature is essentially corporate—that there is, in fact, no room for the solitary Christian: and for our subject to-day these two points, which I have already stressed in earlier lectures, are especially important. For the Eucharist is too often regarded as the individual act *par excellence*, disregarding both the primacy of the divine activity in the Eucharistic act, and the nature of the Community as the product of that action.

In the last two lectures we have been discussing some of the Community's interpretations of that act of God which constituted its being. To-day we shall consider the Eucharist as the centre of the Community's life. This position is one with which we have long been familiar by reason of that sentence in the Catechism, which describes the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as existing for "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." And, because its nature is that of a remembering and a doing, here particularly the Archbishop of York's thought is true: "Conceptual thinking is an interim procedure";<sup>1</sup> and we are continually brought back to the realization that the command was not to think something in remembrance of Jesus, but to do something in remembrance of Him. And it is, perhaps, because we have thought too much and done too little that the sacra-

ment of unity has become the sacrament of disunity.

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In the space of an hour there is obviously no possibility of comprehensive treatment, even if I were competent to attempt it. My purpose in this, as in all these lectures, is to suggest lines for further thinking, not to follow them through; and the plan I have proposed to myself for to-day is, first, to make some general introductory remarks, and then to consider the Eucharist in its dual aspects as, first, the act of God and, second, the Community's worship.

In so far as I understand it, these two may not be separated. The act of God and the Community's worship form one single complex, and once again we can observe, what I have noted already in the last two lectures, that the act of God is apprehended only in the context of the worshipping Community, and not in isolation. In other words, there is a real relationship between the doctrine of the sacraments, the doctrine of the Church, and Christology; and it is the lack of a clear understanding of this fundamental relationship which, in my judgment, accounts for the difficulty of securing a really vital belief in the sacrament.

(1) *Preliminary considerations.* The setting for our thought about the Eucharist can be seen in some lines from a very well-known hymn:

"The Church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord; . . .  
And for her life He died."

Add to this two sentences from the New Testament and the setting is complete: "Proclaim the Lord's death till he come," and "This do in remembrance of me." And in passing, we need not stay to discuss whether that latter saying represents an actual com-

mand of Jesus Himself in the days of His flesh, or whether it represents the Community's understanding in the light of their knowledge of Him, risen and ascended.<sup>2</sup> The historical question of institution is, for our present purpose, secondary to the fact that from the earliest days this was done in remembrance of Him, and the doing of it was regarded as being the doing of His will. Those lines from that hymn, and those two sentences from the New Testament condense into a small compass the truth that we have already observed, namely, that the Community owes its being to an act, to a reaching out of God to effect man's redemption. This reaching out is of that kind which is expressed parabolically in the story of the love of the Father, who, while his prodigal but penitent son was yet a great way off, ran to meet him. And that running to meet is the paradigm of God's dealing with sin. It is not just an attitude that we are concerned with here; that makes nonsense of Old and New Testaments alike; but we are presented with an active objective dealing with sin, and that conditions our understanding of the drama of redemption. This active dealing had for its purpose the creation of a redeemed Community, and the method of that action and that creation was fundamentally sacrificial.

Sacrifice is a word about which much has been written. For our present purpose it is enough to remember that one of its main underlying ideas is that of cutting off from a lump for a purpose; and that carries with it the corollary that holiness is nothing apart from a purposive end. If we examine ancient sacrifice we shall get an outline of the redemptive method to which I referred just now. It seems always to have involved two interwoven ideas. First, it contains the idea that something had to be given (and that that something should be the best available),

but that the giving was always in the context of a Community; that is to say, it was never at the whim of a private individual, but always in some way subject to rule, regulation, or custom, not prescribed by himself alone. And, second, something had to be shared; and it needs no elaboration to drive home the point that sharing is essentially a corporate conception. In Semitic thought these two complementary aspects of sacrifice fused in the dying of the victim, but it was not made clear all at once how that dying would co-ordinate these two fundamental ideas. The great prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries took a long step to purge the practice of offering material gifts of the notion that God in any sense needed material things for Himself.<sup>3</sup> They were ready to acknowledge that in some sense the Community needed to make this offering whereby a result described as propitiation could be achieved, but they were insistent upon the fact that God did not need the offering Himself. But though this clarification of ideas did not happen all at once, it is possible to see in the Old Testament, taken as a whole, how the sacrificial method was at the basis of the creation and existence of a saved and saving remnant—a Community, holy and sacrificial in function—a people of God.

Though the Old Testament is complex when scholars set about its detailed analysis, its general line is sufficiently clear, and there is one classic illustration of a principle which pervades the whole of its writings: "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls." There, in words from Leviticus xvii. 11, is the all-important principle illustrated. "I have given it to you": there is the objective divine act, and therein we see how the holiness and efficacy

of sacrifice are constituted by the purposive offering of *life*, so that it is that and not death that atones.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of a right understanding of this principle when we move on to consider the New Testament. The ideas and the imagery in which Christians sought to express their awareness of their common life and its source were derived from the Old Testament, and the Cross is to be understood in this context. Thus it is that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews can say that "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." He does not mean without a dying simply, but without the complete and completed offering of a whole *life* there is no remission. And, to get back to where we started from, that is why the hymn goes on to say: "And for her life He died."

In other words, to sum up these preliminary considerations, the basis of the redeemed worshipping Community is Christological; and that basis is also eschatological in that there is complete discontinuity: "The first things are passed away. . . . Behold, I make all things new." There is the essence of eschatology, and in the existence of the Community eschatology is realized. That is why we "proclaim the Lord's death till he come," and that is why we proclaim it on the first day of the week especially. It is not because He died and things ended there, but because that death was a victory inaugurating a new creation, so that there is no dead Christ upon the altar,<sup>4</sup> but what is there is life. His life is there and His humanity, glorified through His humiliation, "a Lamb as it had been slain," but "alive for evermore"; and only so dare we sing, "Glory be to God on high."

(2) *The Eucharist as the Act of God.* Against some such background as that which I have sketched so far, we can pass on to consider what is of primary



importance. This is that in the Eucharist the Community does not do something, however perfect or however potent, merely to remind itself of something, or just because it wants to, or for any similar reason. What happens in the Eucharist is fundamentally no human act; but, because the basis of the Community is what it is, the Eucharist is the act of the Community's Head and of His body—that is to say, it is the act of Christ in His Church. Some words of the Master of Corpus, to whose paper in *Essays Catholic and Critical* I owe a great debt, put this point well. "In accordance with our conception of Christians not as external to our Lord, but as members of His body, Christian acts performed by His command must be thought of less as performed by His authority than as performed by Him through the members of His mystical body." <sup>5</sup>

This thought is central. Earlier types of sacrifice were repetitive and human: "by the blood of bulls and goats" is "remembrance made of sins year by year." But in sharp contrast to these temporary measures stands the self-sacrifice of the worshipping Community's Head. Here is a Sacrifice which is unique and final; and, if the Community's interpretations—which we have discussed in earlier lectures—are valid, it is also divine. Once again the writer to the Hebrews sums it up: "Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." There is, therefore, no room for anything more. It is "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice" which we can never repeat, for the simple reason that it is not our act, but His.

But it is more than memorial, it is more than the symbolical repetition of what cannot be repeated. So Christians have consistently found, but it has not always been easy for them to justify their thought

without doing violence to the uniqueness of the one Sacrifice. Once again the Master of Corpus, in his exposition of the Eucharistic theology of Père de la Taille, helps us to see how both sides of our conviction can be retained.<sup>6</sup> If we analyse sacrificial practice, we find that it involves two main elements. First, there is the death of the victim, and second, the ritual acts investing that death with the efficacy claimed for it. The important point here is that sacrifice is not just a killing and a dying, but that it is a killing and a dying which is an offering of life liberated in a special way in a context of recognized practice, that is to say, in the context of a Community's cultus; and the acts which invest the death with its significance are integral to the complex unity of sacrifice. So if we think of the Last Supper and the Eucharist as the acts expressly investing the life offered on Calvary with its special significance, then each individual Eucharist is far more than a memorial. It is, if not a sacrifice, at least constitutive of *the* Sacrifice, which was once and for all both an acknowledgment before God and man of the nature and consequences of sin, and the expiation of that sin.

If this be a valid analysis of the Eucharist, it is abundantly clear that its celebration is not optional, and accidental to the life of the Community, but essential and integral, because it is the divine method of investing the death with its significance and so pre-eminently of liberating the efficacy of life. From this it follows that it is no merely past event which is commemorated in the Eucharist. "In the Liturgy the past is apprehended as present, and Bethlehem, Calvary, the Mount of Olives are brought into the here and now, or better, the Liturgy is really enacted as in the heavenly places, and past, present and future alike are seen *sub specie eternitatis*." And

again: "When therefore in the Eucharistic act the Church proclaims the Lord's death until He come, this is much more than a mere commemoration of a past event. It is commemorated as an event in history, it is also represented as the central point of all history, as that which gives the meaning of all history. Christ is the fulfiller and the Head of the ages." <sup>7</sup>

In the first lecture I spoke of the convergence of history to the crucifixion and its subsequent divergence from it. It is in this sense, and especially in the light of what I have said in this lecture about sacrifice, and the Sacrifice of the death of Christ, that I suggest we can see the meaning of history embodied in the crucifixion. And we see glory achieved and manifested through humiliation; and a glory which is not His alone, but ours in Him. That key unlocks and explains the complexity of history by transcending past and present and future. For in the daily act of God upon our altars the one Sacrifice is consummated. This view has important consequences; for if this analysis is valid the question of the nature of the presence in the Eucharist is rid of some of its perplexities. On this view there is a real transcending of time, the tension of temporality is removed, and past and present unite in a strictly non-temporal mode.

I said something about presence in the second lecture, and do not want to cover that ground again. The points I then sought to make were:

- (i) To illustrate the importance of distinguishing ideas of presence from ideas of space;
- (ii) To show the complexity of the notion of space;
- (iii) To show how Rashdall's phrase, "A spirit is where it acts," helps to overcome the difficulty; and

- (iv) To bring the emphasis on to action, *quâ* meaning, instead of on to extension.

And this contrast between the two aspects of space (extension, and the *locus* of meaning), is parallel to that between the two aspects of substance (stuff, and the *locus* of activity of function). In this sense *real* presence is not the issue. That is everywhere. But there are degrees of intensity, and sometimes for our apprehension there is localization. So the issue is one of *special* presence, and the question is, "In what sense is Christ specially present?" And here the distinction of stuff from function is important; it lies at the root of the whole sacramental idea.

May I recall an American chemist's description of the human body? "Fat enough for seven bars of soap: iron enough for one medium sized nail: sugar enough to fill a shaker: lime enough to white-wash one chicken coop: phosphorus to make 2,200 match tips: magnesium enough for one dose of salts: potash enough to explode one toy cannon: sulphur enough to rid one dog of fleas. Price of 98 cents at post war prices." <sup>8</sup>

And in that analysis and its implication is the sufficient justification for making function the primary category; and it also shows the lunacy of discussions as to the moment in digestion when the presence is withdrawn, or of suggestions as to chemical analysis of the elements. For if we think of an object not in terms of its stuff, but of its function, that is to say, in terms of the "complexes of opportunities of experience" it presents, then we can see clearly that, in regard to the Eucharist, "in and through consecration those complexes of opportunities of experience which we call bread and wine are changed, not by any change in the original opportunities of experience, but by the addition of new opportunities of experience

which are equally ultimate and have far greater significance.”<sup>9</sup> This is also expressed well in some words of Hodgson in *Essays in Christian Philosophy*: “When we speak of the bread and wine of the Eucharist as being ‘consecrated’ to become the Body and Blood of Christ, we do not mean to say that they cease to be made of one kind of stuff and begin to be made of another, or that from henceforth they are made of two kinds of stuff at once. That would be to imagine them transformed into the corpse of a dead Christ. But it is the presence of the living Lord which gives its whole meaning to the service, and the value we set on the sacrament depends on our faith that it is His will to come among us in this way, as it was His will to walk on earth in the body born at Bethlehem. What makes a thing the body of any person is not the material of which it is made, but the fact that it is the means appropriate to the environment in which he expresses himself. When the Person is Christ and the environment the society of believers, the means chosen by the One and accepted by the others are His Body and Blood in the only sense in which the words can mean anything at all. And the full sense in which they are His Body and Blood is that in which He wills to use them as such, not that in which we are aware of their significance. Once again, they must be what He wills them to be before we can discover what they are; and at any moment our discovery may be partial and incomplete.

“The sacramental system stands for the truth that in true religion the prior activity is God’s, and man’s part is to respond.”<sup>10</sup>

In other words, the act of God concentrated at the Eucharist is the act of the divine self-giving, always present in creation, present in incarnation and present in all the mediation through the material and

temporal world of the spiritual and eternal in its manifold diversity, and therefore is all of a piece with every other mode of our apprehension of God's way of effecting His will.

Because the Eucharistic act is the act of God, it follows that its objectivity is not limited by understanding, by our feeling, or by any human consideration. That way lies humanism. Just as the basis of the Community was seen to be Christological and eschatological, so the basis of the objectivity of the Eucharist lies in the objectivity of incarnation; and the Eucharist illustrates the objectivity of discontinuity and of new beginnings effected once and for all by the act of God and represented at individual celebrations. And, among many other things, this means that it is never an occasion for private mystical contemplation but always an unmerited opportunity of corporate adoring fellowship.

(3) *The Eucharist as the Community's worship.* I have argued that the Eucharistic act is the act of God. It represents that act which is the ground of the worshipping Community, but there is a reciprocal relation from the other side which is the act of worship of the redeemed Community. It is the expression by that Community of their adoration of the act which constituted them a Community; and it therefore essentially and always possesses a corporate character, because the individual becomes personal only in a Community. Certain considerations follow, most of which might be summed up by pointing out that the first person plural is always used in Eucharistic prayers. It is, however, perhaps worth while discussing some points in greater detail.

(i) The Eucharist is never private and individual, because there is no sacrament apart from the Community as its context. To make it private is to make

it the sacrament of disunion. Let me quote Hebert once more: "The celebration of the Christian Mysteries is a social act by which the worshippers are brought out of their isolation into fellowship with one another in the Church, which is Christ's Mystical Body; thereby not only their religious life, but all their individual and social life is re-orientated towards God and is transcended, sanctified and glorified." <sup>11</sup>

Therefore even private prayer is a relative term. There is no ground, possibility or *raison d'être* for Christian prayer except as the prayer of a member of a body, and I would have that remembered as conditioning all I shall have to say next time. Therefore, also, thought about the Eucharist must always be both vertical and horizontal; and only so can we say "with Angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven."

(ii) The corporate character of the Community's worship can be further considered under three headings:

(a) *Thanksgiving and Commemoration*. In one sense the thanksgiving is wider than the commemoration. We thank God for "our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life." In another sense, because the commemoration is of that without which all the rest would be empty, it has the primacy over the thanksgiving, and that is why we go on in that same thanksgiving to say: "But above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." That is why we "do this in remembrance of" Him. But in the content that it gives to this remembrance the English rite is deficient. "No one can hear the Consecration prayer of the English Communion office without being conscious of the sadness that comes from it—solemn sadness, it is true, but the sadness of lament, none the less.

It is as if we were commemorating, not the triumphant sacrifice of the Risen Lord, but the sad death of a glorious martyr.”<sup>12</sup>

There is sad shortening here of the work of redemption; for the commemoration is narrowed down to a death. Some other rites, and especially Eastern rites, are not so woefully deficient. Let me quote some extracts from one of the liturgies of the Russian Orthodox Church: “. . . thou didst not turn thyself away forever from thy creature, whom thou hast made, O Good One, neither didst thou forget the work of thy hands; but thou didst visit him in divers manners, through the tender compassion of thy mercy. Thou didst send forth Prophets; thou didst perform mighty works by the Saints who, in every generation, were well-pleasing unto thee; . . . And when the fulness of time was come, thou didst speak unto us by thy Son himself . . . he appeared upon earth and dwelt among men; and was incarnate of a Holy Virgin . . . And becoming a dweller in this world . . . he released us from the delusions of idols, and brought us unto a knowledge of thee, the true God and Father, having won us unto himself for a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; and being purified with water and sanctified with the Holy Spirit, he gave himself a ransom to Death, whereby we were held, sold into bondage under sin. And having descended into Hell through the Cross, that he might fill all things with himself, he loosed the pains of death, and rose again from the dead on the third day, making a way for all flesh through the Resurrection from the dead. . . . And ascending into heaven, he sat down at the right hand of thy Majesty on high; and he shall come again. . . . And he hath left with us, as memorials of his saving Passion, these Things which we have spread forth according to his com-



mandment. For when he was about to go forth to his voluntary, and ever-memorable and life-creating death . . . (here follow the words of institution, and the Priest then continues:)

"Bearing in remembrance, therefore, this commandment of salvation, and all those things which came to pass for us; the Cross, the Grave, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the Sitting on the right hand, the Second and glorious Coming again. . . . Thine own, of thine own, we offer unto thee, in behalf of all, and for all."<sup>13</sup>

There is the true commemoration. For the victory is a victory of the whole redemptive act, in the preparation of the world, in the incarnation of the Word, in the Cross, and Resurrection, and Ascension of the Redeemer; and that, and nothing less than that is what the sacrament implies. For He, in whose memory it all is done, is no dead victim, but the living author of the redeemed Community, and the source of its being.

(b) *Presence and Fellowship*. I have said enough about presence in this and in an earlier lecture, and there is only one point that I desire to make about the idea of fellowship in relation to the Eucharist. Fellowship is incomplete without communion, and for the re-creation of the unity of the Community participation by its members in the humanity of its divine head alone will avail.<sup>14</sup>

Note once again the practical implication at this point of the relation between Eucharist and Christology; note also how communion is assumed in the prayer of thanksgiving in our office; and note the bearing of this on the wisdom or unwisdom of High Mass with the celebrant as the only communicant.

It is only through actual common participation in the Divine Head that the essential being of the Community is maintained, for it is through Him that its members are linked to one another; and it is failure to see this that results in our miserable individualism.

(c) *Sacrifice*. The divine side of the Sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist has already been discussed, but there is also involved in the idea of the Eucharist the sacrifice of the worshippers. I will quote once more from Hebert, who expresses all I have to say on this point :

“ The Mass is the sacrifice of the Saviour completed in His members, or what comes to the same thing, it is the oblation of the Church having its ground in the oblation of Christ and deriving from it its fulness.

“ The Eucharist so regarded is not merely the Sacrament of the Real Presence, it has also a necessary relation with the Unity of the Church.

“ The whole life of Christians is a sacrificial life. As the self-giving love of Christ is a sacrifice and offering to God, so Christians are to walk in love, and because the whole life of Christians is an oblation even the gifts of Philippians to S. Paul or the songs of praise and good works of the Hebrews can be called sacrificial.

“ This conception is fundamental to the idea of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Fathers, and it always remains alive where the Eucharist is the centre of the Church's worship, and the communion of the people is a regular part of the service.

“ After the memorial of Christ's sacrifice has been made, Christ in giving to the people the sacrament of His sacrifice, unites them with Himself in His self-oblation.” <sup>15</sup>

So, and only so, can “ we offer and present our-

selves . . .” But once again there is need to remember that the basis of oblation and sacrifice is Christological, and if there is no union of divine and human in the Redeemer, there is no possibility for the oblation of the Church.

(iii) Although the act is essentially the act of the Community’s worship, individuals make up the Community whose act it is, and their condition as participants in the act is important. What is required of them is faith; faith not in a doctrine, nor in a theory, but faith as personal trust.

That is why there is need for preparation before participating in the act of the Community’s worship. The individual must seek to prepare his mind so that he may know the central figure in the Eucharist as God; a preparation suggested by the words in the Communion Office which exhort us to “consider the dignity of that holy Mystery.” The individual must also prepare his heart, so that he shall love Him whom he will meet as supreme Good; a preparation to which we are summoned when we are required to be “in love and charity with our neighbours.” And the individual must also seek to prepare his will, by choosing as his pattern Him whose Sacrifice is portrayed; a preparation required by the declaration to be made by those who come, that they “intend to lead a new life.”<sup>16</sup>

And generally, from the manward side, the act being the Community’s worship, we come to give, and we get only through giving. But we can give ourselves only in Him, and because of that and of what He is, we can give only in a Community. Once again practice and Christology unite, and there is no room for the solitary Christian.

\* \* \* \*

I know well the inadequacy of what I have tried

to say, but I wonder whether I can usefully add anything. A sentence quoted by Bishop Gore seems to me to suggest much that I would have said had I been able: "The Incarnation gaped, as it were, incomplete, until in all its parts and elements it was fulfilled in the Eucharist."<sup>17</sup>

I have emphasized the Eucharist as the act of God—as the distributed continuation into the present of His redemptive activity, which historically was concentrated into a few years in Palestine. Here, if anywhere is an instance of the universal character of apparent contingency. But it is not on a philosophical note that I would end. I think I could best sum up what I have tried to say, not in any words of my own, but in some sentences taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"God, having of old time spoken . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son,"

"A merciful and faithful high priest,"

"Who hath passed through the heavens."

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness."

"He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation,"

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"[So let us] enter the holy place . . . by the new and living way . . . which he dedicated for us,"

"Who hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Because of that act the Community is redeemed. Because of that act "we, who are many, are . . . one body." Because of that act exists the "royal priesthood" of the Community, "ministering to the world

the obedience of the Son and the obedience of humanity in the Son.”<sup>18</sup> And the Eucharist is the presentation of that act in the context of a Community’s adoration.

“Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”

## V. THE COMMUNITY'S WORSHIP

### II. PRAYER

IN the previous lectures I have argued that the Christian Community is both the consequence and the means of the action of God in redemption, and that this, if it be true, involves that for the Christian there is no room either for individualism or for anything which may lead to humanism. The Community is the consequence of the action of God in virtue of the fact that its source and life are found in Jesus Christ; and the Community is the means of the redemptive activity of God because the remnant is not only saved, but also saving. In other words, the Community is the organism through which redemptive activity continues to be expressed, in the same way as that activity was expressed through the organism of the human body of Jesus Christ.

We have considered the Community's interpretations of this action of God—interpretations which can broadly be included under the dry heading of Christology; and we have seen how the assertion of the indubitable happening of "a thing most wonderful" was interpreted as meaning that God's own Son had come down and died. That act produced the Community, the central point of whose continuing life is the Eucharist; and in the last lecture we saw that central point as being both the act of the Community's Head and also the worship by the Community of its Head, and that both must be maintained in one simultaneous prehension if the balance of truth is not to be lost.

What applies to the Eucharist, applies also to prayer. In all its forms, whether "private" or "public," it is part of the Community's worship. And just as in the last lecture we saw how the one sacrifice was invested with meaning at each individual celebration of the Eucharist, so, in a very similar way, we can think of the one worship of the Community as coming to focus and expression in our several private prayers. This is more important than anything else. A moment's consideration will show the necessity of it—given the thought of the Community as an organism and not as a collection. A collection leaves plenty of room for really private prayer, for real water-tight compartments. But however much we sometimes might wish for such privacy, it is not attainable in the Christian Church, for, since the earliest days, as we have seen, men have seen it as a body, and themselves in it, as members of a body, as integral to a living organism. And what differentiates an organism from a collection is the necessary relation of the whole to each distinguishable part—which is a part only for purposes of convenient description, for any real part implies or entails the whole. A limb which is cut off is no longer a part; it is a detached object. And so it is with the worshipping Community. There is no room for the solitary Christian—in fact the idea of a Christian excludes the possibility of a simultaneous conception of solitariness. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." And we can all remember Paul writing to Corinth: "Ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof."

I have emphasized this, because so-called private prayer is too often regarded as optional, and sometimes as primarily a source of personal satisfaction. These and other inadequate views will be corrected

only as we who pray learn more and more to see our feeble struggles against distraction or sleepiness as elements in the Community's primary activity—the worship and adoration of God; and our failures, of indiscipline and of the casual approach, as being not simply individual missings of the mark, but also and mainly as our contribution to the *weakening* of the Community's life.

But beyond all doubt, there is an important distinction between the two types of worship—the visibly corporate and sacramental on the one hand, and the outwardly private on the other. For the essence of the former is an *act*. As I reminded you last time, its basis is a command to *do* something—not to think something. And it is indisputable that it is far easier for a company of people to join together to *do* something than it is for even two or three to agree to *think* or to ask something. And herein is the special difficulty of prayer, whether private or corporate. Its dominant character is a thinking and not a doing; and thinking does not always come very easily. And it usually happens that we find more difficulty in giving to every man “a reason concerning the hope that is in” us, when his question is about prayer than we do when it is about Eucharist. Of Eucharist we can say to him, “come and *see*,” but not so of prayer. And, try as we may, “foolish ignorant questionings” too often intrude. Just because exhilaration is not, and never can be, the test or guarantee of anything whatever, our overlong sojourning in the wilderness makes us wonder whether all this aspiration for a promised land is anything more than a tantalizing fancy, and the rare moments of ecstasy the witching of a mirage on the far horizon.

And it is because of this questioning which comes, I suppose, to all of us sometimes, and to some of us



fairly often, that I propose to spend all my time on some aspects of the theory of prayer, and to say nothing at all of its methods. But in thus limiting myself I do not wish to suggest that this division ever can be a real one. Our perplexities, which show themselves as intellectual, are very often grounded in distressingly crude practical considerations; and practice can never be divorced from thinking, nor thinking from practice, without a high probability of disaster. If, to take an obvious example, we desire to understand what friendship is, we do not sit down in cold detachment and try to analyse the idea. We attend to our actually existent friendship, and by deepening it arrive at some unfolding of its precious mystery. And the attempt to analyse friendship without knowledge and maintenance of the richness of a friend's affection is as impossible a task as is the attempt to expound the concept of whiteness when we have never seen white things.

And prayer, like friendship, is essentially a personal relationship, with all the delicacy and all the strength that that relationship implies. It can be analysed up to a point; the conditions necessary for its maintenance can be classified up to a point—openness, honesty, loyalty, a real caring, and that indefinable heart of it all, *rapport*; all these can be sifted out and looked at separately, but it is only in their complex integration that the relationship exists, which is far more than the sum of its parts.

So then, just as with friendship, so with prayer; to understand it we must practise it, and its practice may often be a costly affair—often? or should I say “always”? For if “our God is a consuming fire” (and holy love is not inadequately described so), then, if we get near Him in some special way, some parts of us may be painfully burnt; *and*, if we take precautions

against being burnt, we will not get near Him. (I shall say more of this later on.) It is a case of all or none; there can be no reservations. The condition of one who prays is, "O Lord, take over all the freedom that is mine."

\* \* \* \*

In what follows, I shall make no attempt to touch on more than one or two of the many points which are involved in any consideration of prayer. And, as in the last lecture, so now, my method will be that of attempting to suggest lines for thought rather than to develop a complete treatment. All that I intend to do is, first, to consider one or two points connected with the possibility, the quality, and the recognition of *rapprochement* between God and man. And second, I shall consider very briefly certain theoretical difficulties often urged against prayer, with a view to exhibiting the common basis of the misconceptions which they contain. Next, I shall touch on the theoretical side of the moral factor to which I made passing reference just now. And last, and at much greater length than the others, I shall offer some reflections upon the question of the answer to prayer. My purpose in spending more time on this than on anything else is because if the Community claims to be the people of God, claims, that is, to be the organism of the Divine redemptive activity, it is important to be able to offer reasons for the claim made that God can and does direct the actions of the individuals composing the Community; and this direction, though mediated in a variety of ways, is a matter which specially concerns prayer. But once again, I would ask that in all this it shall be remembered that the theory of prayer can never be divorced from its practice.

(1) *The possibility, quality and recognition of "rapport."* The formal theory of prayer involves the justification of the claim that it is reasonable to believe in a God who is approachable, and who is not inadequately described as personal. But the whole of religion, or at any rate, the whole of the Christian religion, stands or falls by that, and so I pass on to consider certain more specific points.

In view of certain present movements of thought there is need for some consideration of the question: "Can man know God?" There are those who assert either explicitly or implicitly that God and man are incommensurable, and who press to its extreme conclusion the saying: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," urging in effect that there is vastly more difference between man and God than there is between a jellyfish and man. What is to be said in the face of contentions such as these? No one who is a convinced theist, or who has regard for the authority of Scripture will desire to minimize the difference between God and man. The difference is given complete expression in the idea of creation, so that always the Creator is other than the created. But while that be true, it is just as much matter of fact that there are tracts of experience which demand that the rigid antithesis shall not be maintained.

It is not my purpose now to consider the various ways of conceiving the metaphysical status of man in relation to God. My concern is with something more simple than that. In face of this assertion that man and God are incommensurable, what is there to be done? We may deny the radical difference by saying that God is manhood at its most perfect, or by inventing some subtly worded phrase which shall conceal the basic fact that we are doing away with the essen-

tial difference between one who needs salvation and One who alone can save. That, in whatever form it takes, and with whatever skill it may be expressed, is the thin edge of the wedge of humanism, and is merely solving one difficulty by creating another and a greater.

If we do not then deny this assertion of incommensurability, we can maintain it in its full stark force. We can press to its extreme conclusion all the difference between Creator and created, and in doing that we shall increasingly empty prayer of its warmth. If we pursue that course, we shall find ourselves more and more implicated in a deistic type of universe where God is utterly aloof, for His only concern has been somehow or other to produce that which is utterly alien to Himself, to set it going, and then to sit back in indifferent ease, remote and out of touch because His ways are not our ways. No one who has tried to understand and to enter into the experience that lies behind Scripture can admit the truth of such a position.

The Community, whose history Scripture traces, has known Him, and known Him as close at hand in their wanderings and in the daily details of life. The Bible does not make sense if God and man are incommensurable. Yet the Creator and the created are not the same.

Only one possibility remains, and that is to resolve the radical difference between God and man, not by any manipulation of logical counters, but in terms of those systematized assertions of Christian experience the history of which we were tracing in the third lecture, and which pointed to the conclusion that our normal exclusive categories fail to hold the treasures of God.

Notice how once again this matter runs out to

experience and to the challenge towards submission to its constraint that experience entails.<sup>1</sup> Are we ready, in the face of logic, to say, "This one thing I know," and to carry that certainty to its conclusion wherever that may lead?

It has been part of my purpose to show that Christians have been ready to do this, that the thing "almost too wonderful to be" has been known to be true, and that this knowledge has received pragmatic verification by the passage of time. And as with that, so now. The real theoretical perplexity of the incommensurability of God and man finds resolution in that linkage which the Community claims to find in the Person of its Head. Through Him there is access, because in Him both co-exist. So, once again, we see how the daily detail of practical living, the practice of prayer and the possibility of *rapprochement*, are linked with the astounding assertions made by the Community in its interpretation of the act of God; and once again there is an instance of the importance of always quickening theory, by keeping it linked with practice.

So far I have been arguing that those who assert the incommensurability of God and man, and who thereby tend to destroy the possibility of that *rapprochement* which is at the heart of Christian prayer, do so only by being indifferent to the consequences which arise from that act of God which we speak of as incarnation. Having then suggested this way of establishing the possibility of *rapprochement*, I turn to consider the second specific point—that of its quality and recognition. Does what we are accustomed vaguely to speak of as religious experience contain something peculiar to it which distinguishes it from other types of experience? Can this peculiar something be recognized and used as a criterion of the presence of a specific cause? In

other words, has religious experience got evidential value? That is the heart of the matter. Consider friendship. Can we analyse it? How far can we analyse it? And is there at the end of our analysis something definitely recognizable, yet which escapes analysis, and which is the real qualitative thing about friendship? I think there is. But just because I think there is, I am quite unable to fix it in such dry things as words; and it is just at this point that there is controversy in regard to religious experience.

The mystic, to use that vague word in a general sense, will assert that in religious experience there is to be discerned something which is of unique quality, which is read off from the experience and which is *sui generis*. I think it would be true to say that Otto is the most well-known exponent of this view.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there are those, of whom Dr. Tennant is perhaps the most well known to many of us,<sup>3</sup> who deny this uniqueness; they assert that what distinguishes religious experience is nothing in itself, but is the hypothesis that God is its cause, which is applied to otherwise normal experience to interpret and unify it. In other words, for those who hold this view, God is not read off *from* the experience, but is read *into* the experience; and what we *have* is joy, and hope, and fear, and penitence, and strength; and when we have them we interpret their happening in terms of God as cause.

In the second lecture I said something about the category of cause and the general interpretative character of knowledge, and I am not going to add more now to what I said then; but it is important to notice that this controversy about the evidential character of religious experience does raise the most fundamental philosophic problems about the nature of causality and its recognition, and serves, therefore,

to warn us that the issue may not be hastily simplified without risk of grave loss. It suggests also a warning to us of the importance of the issues involved. Discussion as to the nature of causality is no barren thing, but is of first importance for the understanding of the nature of Christian prayer. And while that discussion of the philosophers is going on, we, who perhaps cannot ourselves engage in it, may rest satisfied with the pragmatic test I have already referred to in the second lecture: "By their fruits ye shall know them." There at least we found a test of presence, and there, too, we may find the test for the recognition of causality. It may be that Dr. Tennant's flank is to be turned in some such way as this. For if we grant, as we clearly must, that nearly all of our knowing is of the interpretative kind, it still remains that, for a reading in of explicit causality to be possible, that which is patient of this reading in must be present in the Objective order. In other words, the fact of the possibility of explicit developed reading in presupposes the prior reading off of embryonic causality. If that line of thought be valid, then there is room for the contention that religious experience is *sui generis*, as well as for the assertion that knowledge, and especially knowledge of cause, is arrived at by reading in.

(2) *Some alleged theoretical difficulties.* I pass on now to consider very briefly some theoretical difficulties which often are raised. These difficulties usually are related to petition and intercession, and often we find ourselves raising them in the attempt to put up a moral smoke screen between ourselves and something we do not want to do or to believe.

(a) It is sometimes said that it is immoral to ask to be *made* moral. Morality is essentially a personal affair, and we all know that legislation is not that

which promotes morality. If I do a thing because I have got to, without any compliance on the part of my will, my act is not a moral act. And so, in that sense, being made "moral," not only is immoral, but also is nonsense, because no one can be *made* moral. That is really the resolution of this perplexity—a perplexity which is a particular case of a general and recurrent paradox. Thus Paul wrote to Philippi: "Work out your own salvation for it is God that worketh in you," and the Pelagian controversy of the early fifth century was but the hammering out of some of the logical implications of this fundamental paradox. The resolution is in terms of grace. So long as grace is thought of as something other than personal, it is immoral to be asked to be made moral, but when grace is thought of as personal *rapproch* and the influence of love, there is nothing wrong in asking one who loves to help you to be worthy of his love.

(b) Another objection sometimes made to petitionary prayer is that its causality is nothing other than auto-suggestion. It is worth noticing that those who make this kind of objection quite clearly admit that prayer does something. It would not be worth while discussing causality, which is what the assertion of auto-suggestion really raises, if there were not something which had been caused and which needed explanation. So those who assert auto-suggestion do not doubt the efficacy of prayer, but they want to be able to say that the cause of what happens is not what Christians claim it to be. Clearly the objector has no proof; equally clearly the Christian has no proof derivable from the actual experience of prayer itself. If you have no room for God, but if you are honest enough to admit that prayer does something, then you must find a cause in the self for what happens; but even if you have room for God, you can still if you



like think of the mechanism of the causality recognized in prayer as not inadequately to be described in terms of auto-suggestion, because the causality train can have many different routes. It is the person who has originally dictated the telegram who is the cause of it, even though there may have been many other subsidiary causes involved before the idea reached the mind of the final recipient. And so it is with prayer; the explanation of causality in terms of auto-suggestion does not negate the primacy of the divine causality.

(c) There is another large class of objections based on the contention that prayer and natural law are incompatible. It is no part of my purpose to consider the conception of law in any detail now, but it does need saying that the conception of law as a rigid principle to which everything must conform with unvarying necessity is long out of date. In its place, some have put a conception of law as pragmatically verified description. Others have suggested a conception of law as statistical; that is to say, that it represents the average behaviour of large numbers of relatively self-determining beings. Others again have suggested that it can better be understood as the large scale expression of habit in a spiritualistic pluralism. But whichever of these, or other, views may prove most capable of co-ordinating fact, what does remain true is that there is no scientific necessity for a conception of law involving that kind of rigidity which makes it incompatible with Christian prayer. Clearly there are impossibilities for our asking. In ordinary affairs two people cannot ask for and expect to receive contradictory gifts at the same moment; but if the Christian conception of petition is remembered, and especially if it is seen to be not just asking for anything one may want, there is room, and ample room, for

Christian petition in the same universe as scientific law, with all the regularity and predictiveness which characterizes that law and makes it so powerful a means of ordering and of understanding the meaning of the world.

(d) Some would say that there is no place for detail in prayer, and others would argue that prayer is impossible without a more detailed knowledge of a situation than we have got. It is not necessary to spend much time on these objections. If we examine ourselves when we find ourselves making them, we shall find that they are usually nothing other than excuses for laziness. We do not want to be bothered to think, and so we say that there is no room for detail, because to put in detail would mean thinking. Or we do not want to be bothered to intercede, and so we say that because we are not completely aware of all the circumstances which make two more catechists in Lebombo very desirable, we shall refrain from asking that they shall be provided. It is laziness that induces this objection, and sometimes laziness is coupled with a strange conception of God. If "Father" not inadequately describes Him, what He will expect of His children is not omniscience, but the intellectual use of such powers of thought as they may have.

(e) Occasionally there is heard the objection to prayer based upon the problem of distribution of the divine attention. How can God hear everyone at once? This question is asked because humanism is already at work in the mind of the questioner. *We* find ourselves hard put to it to be intelligent even to two people at once, and so while judging that God may well be more intelligent than we are, we still find it hard to suppose that He can pay attention to the whole variety of prayer which is being made to Him at the same time. But we cannot measure the capacity of divine love by our limitations.

(f) And the same kind of difficulty arising from inadequacy in the conceptions of prayer and of God is seen in the last of the objections that I shall notice now. During the Great War, and at many other times, the problem of the worth of conflicting prayers was often raised. When two people whose interests are diametrically opposed pray that what they believe to be right may happen, one of them must, it is argued, be praying for what is wrong. Objections of this kind really rest on a confusion. The worth of prayer is confounded either with a knowledge of fact or with the level to which the conscience of him who prays has been educated. And when we remember that a perfect prayer does not need omniscience, while it does need the intelligent use of all the material at its disposal, and further, that the worth of a prayer does not depend upon the one who prays being a saint, but upon his seeking to grow in goodness, then we shall see that the pattern prayer: "Thy will be done," points the way to a solution of the difficulties of the kind to which I am referring in these last two paragraphs. If, then, we survey objections of all these six kinds we shall, I think, see that when they are not smoke screens they are based upon misconceptions—misconceptions either of law as rigid, or of prayer as coercion, or of God as humanized.

(3) *The theoretical side of the moral factor.* At the beginning of this lecture I said that if we want to pray, we must be ready for it to hurt. I now revert very briefly to give grounds for that statement. I have been arguing that our claim to have a real touch with God in prayer is not an impossible one. In other words, I have been arguing that what is then going on in us is of the same kind as that awareness which is built up into our knowledge of the external world. And I have suggested in an earlier lecture also that no

act of knowing is naked photography; that in part at any rate we read ourselves in as interpreters; and that the result of this reading in is that our wants, our failings, and so on, colour what we say we know. In large measure we see what we want to find. In this sense the wish is father to the thought, and if what we want is not there, we will not so easily see what is there.

Now let us assume that the purpose of the world is to express God's will for the moral growth of persons. If that is the purpose of the world, then its fabric, and pattern, and plan will express this and minister towards it. Then knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the pattern is most likely when the knowing mind is of the same kind as what it knows. The phrase "the same kind" is deliberately vague, but it points to the truth I am concerned to emphasize—that if the world is God's then intellectual discernment of the world is morally conditioned.<sup>4</sup> This then is true of indirect apprehension of God through His works. It is all the more true of prayer as in some sense direct apprehension of God. And hence arises the difficulty of thinking the possibility of prayer for an unsundered life—not, that is, for a sinless life, but for an unsundered life. The "pure in heart shall see God," and that means those who are single-minded; and that is why the prime permanent necessity, as well as the starting point for prayer, is penitence. For the desire to meet God and the hope to remain unrepentant are inconsistent, and are foredoomed to failure. Only, then, as penitents can we expect to pray; only as penitents can we expect to find our prayer answered.

(4) *Answering, and the recognition of divine commands.* The objector who asks whether God can answer prayer is putting a question which is an

absurdity. Its absurdity is due to ambiguity in the word "answer," as well as to the isolation of individual sentences of scripture from their context. Answering is not a case of giving whatever is asked, and that problem, as well as the questions suggested by isolated texts are cleared up once and for all when the true nature of prayer is remembered as that which is offered in His name.

The granting of a petition, therefore, is conditional on its being in accordance with God's will; and we come in prayer as little children telling Him our needs so far as we understand them (which is not very far), and as little children completely sure that what He gives is for the best, for He knows "our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking." And so, once again, here we see what we have seen so often before, that it is only as a worshipper, humble, adoring, penitent and obedient, that the Christian can make petition. And to such an one there is no room for the idea of coercion, but much room for the simple requests of a child. And as children we shall remember that when the Father says "No" He answers; and that the emphasis in the New Testament is on faith in the Father's purpose, not on faith in His readiness to do our will.

So, then, it is absurd to put the question: Can God answer prayer? But it is not absurd to ask whether He does. And at the outset it is important always to hold clearly the distinction between *post hoc* and *propter hoc*. All too often the distinction is obscured, and the resulting argument is invalid from the outset. Nevertheless, we believe that "the earth is the Lord's," and if we read in to an experience, or a growth, or a release, divine causality, the believer has no doubt. In other words, we once again interpret in terms of a hypothesis as to the cause, and once

again a chain of subsidiary causes does not negate the primacy of the first.

But though this may for a time satisfy us as an explanation, it is not enough. Is there real guidance to be had in prayer, and how? It is easy, and perilous, to make wide claims for the guidance of God: it is easy, and perilous, to leave no room for that guidance because it is difficult to see how it works. And having tried both these slippery paths, I must spend some time on this question of the Christian's duty to obey God, and the problem of our recognition of God's commands.

I suspect there is no one who does not recognize that in the abstract such a duty exists. Every day at Morning Prayer petition is made that "all our doings may be ordered" by God's governance, but for one reason or another there is a gap between our profession and our practice. And to the question, "Why is there this gap?" three answers are given perhaps more often than others. A man may say that he has doubt whether God commands anything at all; or he may plead that while he recognizes the existence of divine commands he is in doubt as to what they are; or he may frankly admit that he knows it is his duty to obey God, but he does not do it because he does not want to. I propose to offer a brief consideration of each of these three, and especially of the second.

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The first answer sought to explain the gap by expressing doubt as to whether God commands at all. Another way of framing the reply would be: "If God does command then it is my duty to obey Him; but I don't think He does intervene in that kind of way." Put this way, this is seen to be a special case of the general evaluation of the merits of two different

philosophies—deism and theism; for such an argument implies the absentee landlord kind of God. It is to be met by any of the constructions leading to a theistic view of the world—that is, to the kind of view expressed in the line: “O Strength and Stay upholding all creation,” or in the prayer, “that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance.” It is no part of my purpose to spend time on such an argument. In a world in which there is no possibility of divine intervention there is no room for Christianity, and there is certainly no place for considering the duty of obedience to God. But before I leave this widest field of God’s general governance of the world, there are two points which arise here, and which are important:

(i) A settled order is a precondition of the existence of morality. Unreliable chaos is not the place where character is born. So the factor of the fixity in the constitution of things is part of what indicates the nature of God’s direction of His world and makes His claim on our obedience. God has “left not himself without witness” in the pattern of His creation, and we who are within it are by *its* very constitution *and ours* challenged to obey.

(ii) Arguments against the divine government of the world sometimes take the form of denying its possibility because it is incredible that God should take account of the so-called trivial. I sometimes wonder whether those who so argue have ever set themselves to discover what exactly it is that they are labelling trivial. It is easy to construct an artificial trivial by arbitrary isolation of a section of events in a search for clear-cut secondary causes, and the whole problem of causality suffers from this artificial isolation. But when we enlarge the field or, rather, when we refuse to limit it, each item is seen to have signifi-

cance as part of a significant whole. When my small daughter and I build with little bricks, the position of each brick taken by itself does seem trivial until it is seen as part of a wider plan.

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The second of the three reasons for the gap between practice and profession is a live issue for most of us. It may be expressed thus: "I can well see that God may and does direct, but how am I to know what is His will?" There is nothing profound or abstract here. Theoretical difficulties are real, but for myself such an objection is often an excuse for laziness or moral cowardice. I find myself seizing on the fact that certainty is absent, to be inert, and tend to fall into the position of those who seek "a sign from heaven" before they will allow anything to interfere with their own ordering of their lives. And for myself, and for others in such a mood, the need is to be shown that there is no ultimate difference between the status of judgments of fact, on the one hand, and of judgments of duty on the other. Both contain an inner element of probability, and to act on the one without question, and to hesitate to act on the other on the pretext of desiring certainty, is to evince an inner duplicity hard to distinguish from dishonesty. I shall try to illustrate this point by a short account of the ways in which, if at all, knowledge of the direction of God is to be had—an account worded generally, but needing, I hope, no elaboration to show its specific relation to petitions for guidance in the prayer of the Community and its individual members.

It would be unreasonable for a believer to rule out of account the possibility of the mediation of divine guidance by the objective constraint of a situation. But it would be just as unreasonable to hold that



particular divine guidance controlled my present blinking of my eyelids. All such actions and behaviour are consequent upon there being embodied persons, and they find their sufficient reason in whatever is regarded as the will of God for the organism in which they occur. But there is another type of objective constraint to which this does not apply—the kind of constraint which operates when, for example, something which we would normally describe as an “accident” prevents my fulfilling a plan to make a journey, with the result that I meet someone whom I should not otherwise have met.<sup>5</sup> The problem of divine guidance in cases of this kind is one of extreme difficulty: multitudes of accidents seem to have no reason, but some most significantly do. Adequate analysis is impossible; but it is indubitable that it sometimes seems as though the faulty workmanship years back which issued in a broken axle in the present was woven into a wider plan, and became a way in which the guidance of God was mediated. But for our present purpose it is enough to notice that guidance is discovered *after* the event, that it is read *in* to a situation as an interpretation of the facts. Where constraint of this kind is present, deliberation is absent, and the consequent action or event is not really personal. But in the majority of human decisions, deliberation is present, while the *place* of deliberation varies. One kind of decision is reached *after* a process of thought, when the situation is imaginatively envisaged, others consulted, principles are applied, and consequences estimated. The extent to which the process of thought is carried through varies, and it may not always seem to be present as much as it really is; but in general, most major human actions originate in this way. Another kind of decision first comes into consciousness as a kind of

ready-made intuition with a unique definiteness, and often a quality of apparent intrinsic authority. The reflective and deliberative process then *follows* and does not precede the conviction; and is concerned not to establish a categorical judgment as in the first case, but to test something which has come clothed, apparently, as a divine imperative. It is over this latter type of experience that most of the questions concerning the recognition of guidance arise, and it is important to observe that the apparently unrelated and immediate character of its emergence has no bearing whatever in itself on the question of its origin. It is also necessary to remember that often what appears to be intuitional is not on that account irrational; for that which presents itself as apparently unrelated and spontaneous is often the product of earlier thought and action, which is presented to consciousness by some factor in the content of the present. And, further, it must be borne in mind that explanations of the psychological mechanism involved in experience have no necessary bearing on the causation of the experience—a complete account of how a motor car works does not bear on the question of why it is being used to convey someone to London.

There is one further type of activity which must be mentioned if our account is to be complete. It is action determined neither by constraint from the objective, nor by reflection, nor by intuition, but by what may be called simple personal preference. If, for example, I am playing with my children on the seashore, our choice of where we dig our water channels seems to me to be of this kind. I am certainly prepared to believe that the guidance of God *may* be operative in this kind of choice, but I know of no experience and of no argument which would make it likely that this is so. And, indeed, not a few

of our moral perplexities seem to imply that there is this category, for much of our effort goes into retaining for the category of the reasonable and moral, choices which we would like to think of simply in terms of personal preference.

If, then, our survey of the factors involved in human action is complete, it will have gone to show that what determines activity is never self-authenticating. In this type of experience as much as in any other, causality is not read off but read in. And yet a well-known element in our experience is that which virtually implies that we recognize an obligation to obedience—in other words, that in which believers recognize the existence of divine guidance; and it is therefore necessary to consider a little more closely the justification for the introduction of the idea of obedience.

In the first and the last types of activity referred to above, the question of obedience in any ordinary sense of the word does not arise. I cannot "obey" when a situation is objectively constraining me: *after the event* I may interpret the constraint in terms of a hypothesis as to its cause; but *at the time* the factors constitutive of obedience are not present. Recognition of divine guidance here, then, may be rapid in view of previous experience and its explanation, but is never ingredient to the situation itself. And in that type of activity also, of which I just now spoke as the exercise of simple personal preference, there is no question of obedience, for it is probably true to say that in it there is never before the mind<sup>1</sup> any question of obligation or constraint. In these two types of activity, then, there is no place for obedience, and guidance, if it is read in at all, is read in in terms of a general understanding of the structure of the world in which man finds himself.

The case is different in regard to the other two types of activity I have discussed—the two whose broad difference is whether a thought process precedes or follows the conviction of what is right. In the former, the simplest case is that of one who has to choose between two courses A and B. He imaginatively reconstructs the consequences of either course for himself, and for any others whom he thinks it might affect; he applies to the particular elements within the consequences tests of principle; and he enlists the help of others to test his thought. The result is the judgment that A (say) is right, and there-with there enters in a sense of obligation to choose it. The preconditions of obedience are present, and the judgment comes with whatever authority is ascribed to the reasoning process in general, and to the principles, and to the individuals consulted in particular. Recognition of divine guidance in such a process will again not be direct, but will depend upon a general view of the relation of the human mind to the structure of things.

Much the same, with the necessary difference in order, is to be said about that kind of decision or activity prompted by an intuition which seems to come clothed with a divine imperative. It is matter of fact that such intuitions are not always what they seem; and it follows that there is no possibility of certain direct recognition of divine guidance in such intuitions, but that they need testing by the application of principles and the process of thought. And then the situation is the same as that just now discussed, except for the difference that while *then* the object was to decide between A and B, or possibly more, *now* the object is to test the trustworthiness and obligation of an alleged categorical A. And the answer will be the same—that our recognition of

divine guidance in such an intuition will depend, as before, on the view we take of human reasoning, of certain principles, and of certain people. Whatever clothes it may wear, it does not come to us, and cannot come to us with a certificate of identity.

It is, then, so easy to say, "There is no certainty, no 'sign from heaven'; I shall do what I like until there is." But in so saying we do violence to our integrity as persons, and disregard at least two basic elements in our experience. One of these is the quality of the categorical imperative itself, whether it arises intuitively or comes at the end of a process of deliberation. Most of us find in it a transcendent quality, as though something certainly experienced as other than ourselves were coming in to direct, to guide, and to enable. I do not pretend that this is demonstrable to anyone who should disagree, but I claim that it is a sufficiently common factor in experience to require us to pay due attention to it. The other basic element in our experience, which we find it sometimes convenient to disregard, is the fact that we recognize a hierarchy of values which, within broad limits, is common property to all persons. It seems that persons are so made that, in general, love is "higher" (whatever that difficult word may mean) than hate, sympathy than egoism; and the existence of such a hierarchy imposes a moral constraint which we cannot evade without conflict somewhere. It is just worth remembering that quasi-biological explanations of the origin and development of this hierarchy do not affect the present issue at all, and that what we call conscience is the speedy application of this general scale to a particular situation.

But it still remains possible for all this to be disregarded in a stubborn claim for certainty. And then such an one will come to conviction only by seeing

that there is no life except for him who is ready for adventure. The high art of living demands the recognition both of the capacity and of the limits of human reasoning, and he who fights shy of an ethical pragmatism either will sit for ever at his study table engaged in the delights of logic chopping, or will slide into an abyss of kind action and pure feeling without being able to tell anyone else why he does anything. "Probability is the very guide of life," said Butler.<sup>6</sup> Lotze, I think, meant much the same when he urged that reality was richer than thought;<sup>7</sup> and Jesus concentrated the whole of human adventure in the pregnant command: "Follow me." And all that I have so inadequately discussed is contained in some words which Christians at Ephesus put into Jesus' mouth: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

If faith is "the giving substance to things hoped for, the proving of things not seen" then the complete and final answer to the complaint—"How am I to know what is God's will?"—is, "Behave as though the highest you know were God's will, and see what happens." And in the Community's worship in the Eucharist we are continually reminded of what such obedience brought. For He who was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross—a death of dereliction, when unfaltering allegiance to the highest brought for him the blackness of separation from God—He overcame death, and in that victory of obedience "stoops down to bless our lesser Calvaries."

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With reason, then, do we pray that we may "have a right judgment in all things," and that we "may both perceive and know what things" we ought to do.

But, if we examine, however briefly, the third of the reasons for the gap between practice and profession, we shall see still further need for prayer; and here is the transition to the final division of my subject. "I know it is my duty, but I don't want to." That has certainly been the position in which I have found myself many times—entangled in the sheer clash of contending wills. And it just means that I love myself most, and while recognizing what is good, I do what I know to be wrong. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" This is the heart of the Christian paradox, where reason stands overruled by experience. We know that obedience is required of us, and yet we know that "we can do no good thing without" God, and so we pray that His grace "may always prevent and follow us." "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you." Both halves of that injunction are true. And for us there is a conflict: we are *not* "ready both in body and soul, cheerfully to accomplish those things" that God would have us do, and our urgent need is to pray that we may learn to "love the thing which" He commands, and to "desire that which" He promises. The ultimate ground of the problem of obedience (and indeed of all the problems of prayer) is practical: we are for the most part unsundered folk, eager to preserve for our own some territory off which we can warn God, the persistent trespasser. And history shows us the absurdity of that hope; and that was why we began these lectures with something which might lead to the diligent and reverent hearing and reading of the Scriptures. For in that word of God is at once the problem, the challenge, and the solution of man's obedience: the problem, in the epic of Creation where man is set over against God; the challenge, in the prophetic, "Thus saith the Lord";

and the solution, in the call to discipleship of Him who was the Word made flesh.

And so once again, Christology is intimately related to the life of the individual who is a member of the worshipping Community. For his prayer or, rather, the prayer of the Community coming to expression in him, not only establishes but also presupposes a common factor between God and man. It establishes and presupposes that kind of reciprocal relationship suggested in the phrases:

“God created man in his own image,” and

“The Word became flesh.”

And that is why our praying is, and can only be, “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”



## VI. THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY

SEVERAL times I thought of finishing these lectures at this point, but among many gaps one specially conspicuous gap remains. The Community is a redeemed Community, and in Eucharist and prayer it expresses its worship of the Author of that redemption. But it has an active function as well, because it is in no merely verbal sense the body of the Redeemer. *As such* it is leaven leavening a lump, *as such* it is "the light of the world," *as such* it is a sacrificial Community filling up "that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ," and, in expectation of what He through it shall do, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth . . . waiting." Redemption in one sense is complete, in another it awaits individual appropriation; and the work of the Community is that of giving continued and present expression to the meaning of history, to the redemptive, sacrificial, penetrating mediation of the holy life of God.

So there can be no hard lines, no falsely simple division between sacred and secular, no static notions of uniformity or conformity, nor even "good works" regarded as a collection of isolated and commendable happenings; but there can only be an active movement towards the present embodiment "of him who all in all is being fulfilled." And we and all men shall know "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," when, and only when, we are "builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit."

This building is the Community's work or, rather, it is His work in the Community. But its actual

execution is in one sense in the hands of individuals. Their willing and their doing in the petty details of every day constitute the slowly growing fabric of the temple of the Lord, and there is no escape from the problem of morals.

It is of this that I would say something in this lecture by way of conclusion; not with reference to particular points, nor essaying to cover the whole field in its manifold complexity; but hoping, through attention to one or two simple points, to show the relevance to the discussion of morality of what I have said in earlier lectures and, especially, of what I said in the last lecture on the recognition of divine guidance.

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First, I shall make some general remarks on the connection between religion and morality, with some illustrations from the Old Testament.

*Religion is not morality:* there is frequently confusion here. Religion is much more than just being good. Many wish it were not. They wish it would abandon its claim to make assertions about the nature of things; but without that claim, and its consequences in experience, religion loses its identity. But though there may be religion without morality, there is no Christianity which is not ethical in its demands. That is a threadbare truth. But it is no good saying "Be good" without being ready to answer questions of "Why" or "How." Too often we are urged to be good, and not often enough to worship. But though the truth is threadbare, it can never be dispensed with; and the Old Testament derives a major part of its importance from the fact that it is a record of the progressive integration of religion and morality.

At first sight the place of the Old Testament in

Christian worship of to-day may seem strange. The sometimes peculiar problems of a small Syrian tribe 2,500 years ago do not seem to have much reference to our problems and our needs. But, as I urged in my first lecture, thoughtful attention to the remains of the eighth and seventh century B.C. shows that in the minds of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah there was being worked out a claim of primary importance for religion. In these few paragraphs I cannot be anything but dogmatic; but if you read those prophets you will find that they were claiming that man's conscience is a source for man's knowledge of the character of God; and, conversely, that the character of God, in so far as it is believed to be known, is the ground of the rightness or wrongness of human action.

This, and its implications, are in substance the entirely sufficient justification for the continued importance attributed to the Old Testament by Christians. Four of these implications must be noticed :

(i) The assertion that our notions of right have cosmic significance is not the same thing as our claiming infallibility for them. In face of the diversity of human ethical judgments this would be manifestly absurd. But what the assertion does is to point to a fixed point beyond that welter of individualism in which we find ourselves, and to say that in the holy will and purpose of God there is both the source and the criterion of what is right for every human soul, and that the content of this will is to be discovered by progressive corporate reflective search into the contents of the human conscience. And either this is vanity, or there is real commerce between God and man.

(ii) The claim that what we may call corporate conscience is a source for truth beyond itself, brings

emphasis to bear on the true nature of morality. The necessary link in the higher religions between religion and morality has too often obscured the true quality of morality. This again is illustrated from the Old Testament. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah all are stressing the inwardness of morality by carrying on a continuous conflict with a conception of conformity to rule as constituting an adequate expression of man's duty. This receives its finest expression in Micah. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

There is an example of the Old Testament at its highest. But we see a decline with Ezekiel; and gradually the nature of holiness was more and more obscured, till failure to deal with the blood of a sacrifice in the right way was a sin, equal in gravity to theft or murder. This is with us to-day in some types of Christianity. And we realize where this leads, when we remember that it was because there was One who healed on the Sabbath day that the Pharisees made their unholy alliance with the Herodians to destroy the Healer.

(iii) A further implication of the claim that corporate conscience reaches beyond itself to give knowledge of God is expressed in the Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." A proper paraphrase might be: "God can begin to be known only in a life of single-minded moral devotion."

This does not dismiss thought as unnecessary, for mere goodness is by itself no way to knowledge of God of such a kind as can be called truth; but it does mean that goodness, purity of heart or, in general terms, a field of moral striving, is the background without which thought about God is barren. And this is said in other words in a Psalm: "Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, And speaketh truth in his heart." Or, as I have already said in the second and fifth lectures, "intellectual discernment is morally conditioned."

(iv) There is depth, again, in the new idea of man which springs from the religious realization of the worth of his morality. Conscience is not simply that which issues in a sense of obligation; rather is it a vantage point for new exploration into the unseen and, in many respects, our only vantage point. And man, as the possessor of conscience for which this far-reaching claim is made, is either the victim of delusion or else has that foot in both worlds which we think of when we say he is "made in the image of God."

These sentences of mine are but landmarks for a vast area, yet they demand your thought, for the claim is too great to be casually dismissed. But our practical perplexities never end; and the problems of the will are often more pressing, because more frequent and more diverse, than the problems of the intellect. Morality, as utter fidelity to the highest as seen, is the key to the solution of them both. Once that discipline is relaxed truth begins to recede from our grasp; but if the way upwards is always the path we choose, then, though there may be times when the track ends and we seem lost on a steep thickly wooded hillside, at length—and it may be not for a long while—we shall come to the top, and see no longer the

thickets and the undergrowth, but the hills, and valleys, and cities of the land wherein we march.

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I pass on now, from this brief consideration of the relation of religion to morality, to what lies at the heart of Christian morality—the authority of Jesus. I said something about this in the second lecture: in this lecture I cover partly the same ground, but in a different way. The authority claimed for Him is clearly related to what we believe about Him, but if we are to preserve the moral character of His authority our statements of belief must be carefully framed. It is both easy and misleading to say: “He is divine and therefore we must blindly obey Him”: but such obedience lacks the inner essence of morality—namely, the personal choice of what is personally judged to be right, and uses the ascription to Jesus of divinity as a way of escape from the hard thinking often involved in moral choice.

The moral authority claimed by the Christian for Jesus is of two kinds. One is based upon past corporate experience, and the other on present individual experience. That these two are related is obvious, but it will make for clearness to consider them separately. The best approach to the former, namely, past corporate experience, is to start by noticing the difference between the philosophical and the theological attitudes towards ethics. Philosophers (and also the ordinary man, who is more of a philosopher than a theologian) in one form or another appeal to conscience: theologians, on the other hand, to some external authority such as the Bible or the Church or the teaching of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> And the natural question of the philosopher to the theologian is: “If morality is to remain moral, and conscience is to be supreme, can

any external authority be other than superfluous?" The answer to this question is in two parts. First, from the standpoint of everyday life, certain general considerations may be put forward:

(i) It is a fact that experience wider than that of the individual is needed to decide the right *means* to an end judged good.

(ii) Quite apart from the practical knowledge of *means*, an individual is always limited to his own experience in judging the relative worth of ends.

(iii) Not everyone possesses equal powers of judging.

These facts are elementary, but they show that conscience is not always—in fact, is seldom, intuitive. Obedience to conscience is often the acceptance of the moral ideal of the Community. Yet moral progress has most often come when individuals have had the courage to defy existing codes. This seems a paradox to those who leave God out of account, for within time there is no fixed reference for the measure of ethical advance, and from the temporal standpoint the moral reformer is logically anti-social. From which it follows that our belief in the influence on moral progress of great personalities bears witness to the essential non-temporality of conscience.

The second part of the answer is based on theological grounds. Continuing from the thought of the influence on moral progress of great personalities, we can argue that this holds of Jesus. But at this point care is needed. Though this be true, it affords no basis for claiming authority for Him. In the past it was simpler, and the argument ran: "Miracles happened; they guarantee His divinity; that guarantees the truth of His teaching; so man must obey." But that way of proof being happily dead we can no longer say: "He is divine; follow Him."

No, we can obey only when obedience commends itself. But is any place then left for authority other than that of conscience? One way of approach is to inquire under what conditions obedience commends itself. Why do we suppose that Jesus is supremely likely to be right? The process then is the same as that which leads us to accept the judgment of any expert. We test him within the limits of our own judgment, and find him worthy because we see him to be greater, and consequently are ready to defer to him beyond those limits. But even then, in the case of normal healthy people, there is a boundary to such submission; and so once again we are back where we were. We still have to find some basis other than blind submission, for such is not moral because in so doing we abrogate our personality.

A better approach is to find the basis of Christian morals in the true nature of man.<sup>2</sup> This is not to descend to a this-worldly morality, but to build a way up to the other world from the highest point we know in this. This approach has its limitations. Just because the basis of morals has in this way to do with *life*, finality is impossible. No one would pretend that we have a complete idea of man's true nature, but we certainly have some idea; and every advance in distinctness will be a milestone of moral progress even though "our ethical goal may continually recede as we strive to approach it."<sup>3</sup> Some theologians would say that this regress is avoided in Christianity, because of its claim that in the historic life of the man Jesus is made manifest the character of God, with all that that implies for human conduct, so that "sonship to God is the true nature of mankind."<sup>4</sup> But here also the authority is not final, and the goal not static; for, first, imitation is not a moral affair and, second, we are always able to understand



Him and His principles more. And that means that we can only take Jesus' teaching as a guide for moral action when we recognize that it lays down principles and not rules, and when we admit the principle of development as valid for Christians.

Nevertheless, contradictory though this may sound, there is an inner finality here. For, to quote Dr. Oman, "if God, being the Father, can have no more adequate manifestation than His children, what could we seek beyond One who accepts all life's discipline and meets all its demands, deals with all God's children in love, and unfailingly makes peace by obedience to righteousness even to death?"<sup>5</sup>

There, and not in the cold letter of credal forms or the barren futilities of meticulous verbalism, is the real inner finality: yet just because we cannot achieve external finality Christian morality is hard. Most of us are legalists at heart, for legalism saves bother in the long run, and we want a rule to conform to, instead of an ideal to actualize in a developing context. There is the heart of the difference between law and gospel, between dead works and the service of the living God. Christian morality is creative, because the Christian moral agent is in *rapport* with God in Christ.

Do you see where we have come? At the beginning of this section I said that Christians claim two kinds of moral authority for Jesus. One is that of past corporate experience, and that we have just discussed, only to find that in the end the sole basis of what we can call the *historical* claim lies in the continued presentness of Jesus. What then of our claim to His authority in present individual experience?

About that, which is the richest thing in life for many Christians, there is little that I wish to add to what I said in the second lecture. It just is: and living itself is the way to verify the Christian's claim

to present guidance from his Lord. Such guidance is integral to the Christian position, and here, from the standpoint of the world, the Christian is irrational. But there is no halfway house, and there can be no halting about the claim, in spite of frequent failure to appropriate what is offered.

“Yea with one voice, O world, tho’ thou deniest,  
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.”<sup>6</sup>

There is the ultimate basis of authority for the Christian disciple; and the mode of its working is not by the impersonal overruling of omnipotence, but by a “gracious personal love” eliciting slowly the response of our poor love. And when we thus know Him as a present Friend, His authority for our moral striving is supreme. For—and here again I quote Dr. Oman—“truly to love Christ is to be enabled to reverence man as man, man as God yearns over him and has hope of him in his worst estate. The result is necessarily a positive righteousness, because a love which turns us away from all kinds of self-regard, even regard to our own salvation, lays us open to every appeal of need. Then we have a salvation, God’s care is ever enlarging as well as safeguarding, because, when we never lack a heart to feel or a hand to help, we shall never soften life’s discipline to what we cannot evade or limit life’s duties to the avoidance of transgression.”<sup>7</sup>

“Gracious personal love.” There is the real authority: that is what He gives us. And in that giving He is met, not lost in the centuries of history, but present in the confusion of to-day. Look on the symbol of His love who once for all died on a criminal’s cross. Listen to that same one when you meet Him in “the din of working days.” And judge whether there is not that in Him, present and

graciously loving, which elicits from you the response of answering obedient love.

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

There is theology—you cannot escape it: but it is not the cold thing we theologians so easily make it. In one life joining past and present is both motive for our striving and authority over our wills, and conscience retains all its integrity when in humility we acknowledge the authority of the crucified and risen Lord in whom “the love of God at its highest met the sin of man at its worst.”

\* \* \* \*

This authority exists, then. Of that there is no doubt: but claims based on it can be dangerously twisted when they are made apart from principles. “Being His, it doesn’t matter what I do.” This is not so common as the denial of all principles—a denial strengthened by the acute problem of actual Christian disunity, and indefinite disagreement on major moral issues.

And the need is to show that there is place both for principles and for the present guidance of the Spirit of Christ. There is, I think, no sure theoretical way of showing this: because it is always true that to find Him, and so to know His authority, requires an approach to Him by way of the type of living embodied in His teaching. Certain things clearly have to go; others as clearly are required; there is a large area in the moral field free of doubt and division.

This is nearly a circle, but it is true to life; for it is only by living by His principles, so far as we understand them, that we go on to learn more, not only

of their scope and implications, but also of His present guidance.

Certain assertions can safely be made :

(i) The ultimate criterion of principles is personal.  
(ii) Principles are the basis for the apprehension of His authority—for hearing His word to stop or to go on.

(iii) The more His authority is thus actually experienced the more do His principles become the basis of its application in concrete cases—that is to say, the more we are able to see how a given particular falls within a universal. And this increasing understanding of the scope of the principles makes us ready to accept His claims in places which are still obscure.

This emphasis on principle is unpopular : the growing demand for self-expression, and the maxim “ Be a person ” illustrate this. And the result is a sowing of one of the many varieties of wild oats. But the Christian condemnation of such moral experiment is absolute ; and to the question, “ Why shouldn’t I ? ” an answer can be given to anyone except to him who denies that right and wrong are words with meanings. This answer has three parts :

(i) We are not our own :  
(ii) We are not isolated individuals, and cannot limit the results of experiment to ourselves.  
(iii) Even if we could, the choice of a lower when a higher is seen is suicidal to our own moral apprehension and endurance.

I believe that in some such way as this it is possible to demonstrate in any concrete case the conjunction of the authority of principle and the authority of the living Lord. Apply it where you will—to that look, to this word, to such a thought—all apparently insignificant in themselves. And if we say : “ Oh, these things don’t really matter : I know they won’t

lead on to anything else," then let us remember the words of Him whose claim we at once are acknowledging and, in resisting, denying: "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."

I have considered the kind of answer we might give to the question, "Why oughtn't I?" But the last problem is a positive one, and the final theoretical question is, "What ought I to do?" We have seen the relation between religion and morals is not arbitrary but real; that religion has to do with truth as well as with goodness and emotion; and that knowing the truth about things depends upon how far one takes care of his conscience. We have noticed the dual basis of authority in Christian morals, and have seen that, though principles handed down need criticism, and conscience needs educating, both are integral to the actual practice of morality. And I have already suggested the conclusion of the whole matter in some words I used earlier in this lecture. I spoke of "actualizing an ideal in a developing context"; and we need always to remember that because we are persons and life is real, the moment we have a sense of obligation and set about fulfilling it, both the obligation and its context are changing.

So there is no place for a static morality, and two sentences from the Gospels illustrate this: "When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants," and "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven." Whatever else these sayings may mean they clearly show that there is no limit to obligation, no cause for satisfaction, no justification for slacking off, and no rule to be blindly obeyed.

And that means that there is no answer to "What ought I to do?" for that is the way of rule. There is but one course left, and that is to change the question

into a practical and personal form so that it concerns not the act but the agent, and ask, "What ought I to *be*?" Only so is the really personal, and so the really moral, position maintained: for, if a person is the source of genuinely new beginnings, his strictly personal acts cannot be evaluated in terms of conformity with a standard, but in terms of their creative activity in fashioning the pattern and texture of the world. And it is *our* choice which shall decide whether *it* expresses eternal truth.

If such is the status of a person we can see the implications of the Community's interpretation of their Lord: only through the personal could men know the fullness of the divine redemptive action. And because such is the status of a person, the Community's work can be thought of only in terms of an activity which is both corporate and personal, and all of a piece with the redemptive action to which it owes its origin, and to which it bears its witness.

\* \* \* \*

If I am to try to sum up these lectures, I would do so in some words from the beginning of Acts, "Ye shall be my witnesses," because they illustrate the three main contentions that it has been my purpose to draw out. First, that of witness. The worshipping Community has as its manward function the duty of witnessing to Him who is its ground. The character of all witness consists of simple sincerity and single-minded allegiance. The content of the Community's particular witness is no other than that required from those from whom an Apostle should be chosen to fill the place of the traitor. The condition for entering that office was that he should be a witness to the Resurrection. Nothing less than that is required of

the Community and of its members at this present time. No one will suggest that we must be able to testify to the details of historic fact of two thousand years ago, but our witness to the Resurrection is far deeper than that. It is a witness to the whole redemptive victorious act of God, whereby the Community has come into being—an act including the whole course of preparation, the narrowing of it all to the Incarnation of the *Logos*, and the Death, Resurrection and Ascension, and continued life of the Redeemer. Nothing less than that is the content of the Resurrection to which we are called to witness; and the mode of our witnessing is through the actualization in the details of every day of that new life which is the consequence of the Redeemer's victory.

And second, this witnessing is no solitary affair. "*Ye shall be my witnesses.*" Our witnessing is a corporate concern. The command is not to individuals singly, but to a society of persons; to witnesses having a diversity of gifts, but a diversity grounded in a single source; to witnesses having a conscious common loyalty to fashion a future out of a present pregnant with hope, yet looking back with respect and reverence to the Community's past as the spring and source of every new growth; and to witnesses united, not merely by the common possession of a common power to fulfil a common purpose, but by a warm sharing in the quickening stream of love.

And third, and last, this witnessing is grounded in something quite outside the individual, in something outside the temporal. "*Ye shall be my witnesses.*" The content of our witness is not of our choosing; our witness is not to a code of ethics, nor to a system of philosophy, but, as I have said, to a living act of God—the act whose centre is Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation, came down. And we are

witnesses of those things, of His suffering, His rising and the heralding of Him who is the good news. But we are *His* witnesses in yet another sense. Alone and unaided we well may ask: "Who is sufficient for these things?" But because we are His witnesses, "our sufficiency is of God." And so things that look like hindrances are not hindrances, as Gamaliel saw. "If this work be of God ye will not be able to overthrow it." Paul sums up the whole matter when, in writing to the Romans, he speaks of tribulation and anguish, of perils and the sword, and in the next breath shows the essential littleness of these things in words of sure triumph: "In all these things we are more than conquerors." "More than conquerors," yes; but mark the words which follow: "Through him that loved us." That is the end of it all. Our victory is "through him that loved us"; "our sufficiency is of God," and it is "his strength which is made perfect in our weakness."

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably upon thy whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery: and by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence carry out the work of man's salvation: that things which were cast down may be raised up, and things which have grown old may be made new, and all things come to perfection through him by whom all things were made, even thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



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## LECTURE IV

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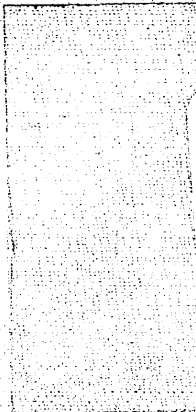


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